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Stoking the Fire:

Nationhood in Early Twentieth Century Cherokee Writing

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Stoking the Fire:

Nationhood in Early Twentieth Century Cherokee Writing

by

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To my grandfather, Henry George Starr

and the generations of Cherokees who continue to stoke the fire.

And for Katharine, who helped make it all possible.

Preface

When I first began to think about the issues that have come to define this project in late 2007, my interests rested at the intersection of what I considered a particularly divisive tone of contemporary Cherokee politics and a personal intellectual curiosity concerning the general lack of scholarly attention to the first half of the twentieth century in Cherokee history and American Indian studies more broadly. In 2004, the Cherokee Nation, following the State of Oklahoma and other tribal nations, passed its own "Defense of Marriage Act," denying legal recognition to same-sex marriages. Three years later, and exactly one hundred and seventy years since writing slavery into the Cherokee Constitution of 1827, Cherokee voters passed a constitutional referendum restricting citizenship to lineal descendants of Indians on the "by blood" Dawes allotment rolls, a move which disenfranchised thousands of Cherokee freedmen descendants as well as a small number of intermarried whites. Framed as acts of sovereignty and self-determination, both moves effectively inscribed prejudice and discrimination as fundamental components of Cherokee national law. As a concerned citizen of the Cherokee Nation, I began to seek out ways in which my scholarship might speak to questions of history, nationhood and belonging.

In large measure, such questions remain fundamental to my approach to Indigenous nationhood, the ethics of citizenship and sovereignty, and the responsibility of citizen-scholars to critically engage the Nation both in our work and in public debate. As

I have developed a more complicated and nuanced understanding of Cherokee history, peoplehood, and politics, however, I have also come to see my work as responding to larger histories and experiences of migration, dislocation, exile and homecoming. My own family's history is a case in point. It begins with the marriage of a migrant Pennsylvania Quaker named Starr to a Cherokee woman from a prominent clan from the mother town of Chota in present day Tennessee. It includes not one removal but many, ranging from the forced expulsion from southeastern Tennessee to Indian Territory; a decision to leave Indian Territory for Texas in order to escape the internecine violence engendered by removal and the Civil War; and my Grandfather's own, self-imposed exile from his home necessitated by economic pressures and social circumstances. There are homecomings, too, of course, such as the family's return to the Nation following the Civil War, my grandpa's continual returns throughout his life to his childhood home in Claremore, and my own journeys to northeastern Oklahoma and the southeastern homelands to visit family, renew friendships, recover language and reconnect with geographies and histories from which we were separated long ago.

In coming to this sense of my own history, I've begun to see that my focus on how nationhood persists even in the absence of an Indigenous state is as deeply connected to this familial history as it is to contemporary Cherokee politics or my own intellectual projects. While my work doesn't explicitly address this personal history, I have come to realize that it is precisely this history which continues to bring me to the work. The issues facing the Nation today, and the challenges Cherokee and other Indian people confront

when imagining solutions to them, are not simply products of our contemporary political or intellectual moments. They have material roots in colonial trauma and its histories of violence and dispossession, as well as the almost incomprehensible efforts by Indian communities not only to survive but to grown and thrive. As I recently stood with my sister on a mountain in southeastern Tennessee named after that immigrant Quaker, it hit me that in many ways, we are still responding to and attempting to make sense of our removals—as individuals, families, peoples and nations.

Stoking the Fire:

Nationhood in Early Twentieth Century Cherokee Writing

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The University of Texas at Austin, 2012

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My research builds upon interdisciplinary trends in Native scholarship emphasizing tribal-specificity; attention to understudied periods, writers, and texts; and a political commitment to engage contemporary challenges facing Indigenous communities. My dissertation examines the persistence of nationhood in Cherokee writing between the dissolution of the Cherokee government preceding Oklahoma statehood in 1907 and political reorganization in the early 1970s. Situating writing by John Milton Oskison, Rachel Caroline Eaton, Rollie Lynn Riggs and Ruth Muskrat Bronson explicitly within the Cherokee national contexts of its emergence, I attend to the complicated ways they each remembered, imagined, narrated and enacted Cherokee nationhood in the absence of a functioning state. Often read as a transitional "dark age" in Cherokee history, this period stands instead as a rich archive of Cherokee national memory capable of informing contemporary debates in the Cherokee Nation and Native Studies today.

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Introduction: Excavating the Cherokee "Dark Ages"

> After allotment, Cherokees no longer took the time to imagine a future for the Indian nation within America. That project would await later generations of Indian people in the new century.
> —Andrew Denson, *Demanding the Cherokee Nation: Indian Autonomy and American Culture, 1830-1900* (2004)

Any survey of the abundant scholarship on Cherokee people will likely leave readers with the mistaken impression that the forced dissolution of the Cherokee government in the first decade of the twentieth century destroyed any sense of national identity from Cherokee peoples and communities. Though a wealth of studies examine the events leading up to and immediately following the Removal in the 1830s,[1] the chaos and destruction of the Civil War and Reconstruction in the 1860s and 70s,[2] the push toward allotment and tribal dissolution in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries,[3] and tribal reorganization in the 1970s,[4] only a handful of essays and book chapters examine the period between Oklahoma statehood in 1907 and the political reorganization of the Nation later in the century.[5] Of these, most tend toward conventional political and population histories and treat the era in passing as a relatively benign transition into the contemporary period of self-determination. Considering the widespread presence of such assumptions, it is no surprise that many consider this period an intellectually inactive and politically insignificant "dark age" in Cherokee history.

Stoking the Fire: Nationhood in Early Twentieth Century Cherokee Writing critically examines a body of literature which, in its sustained engagement with Cherokee

nationhood, fundamentally challenges such readings. Situating writing by John Milton Oskison, Rachel Caroline Eaton, Rollie Lynn Riggs, and Ruth Muskrat Bronson explicitly within the *Cherokee* national contexts of its emergence, this study considers how their experiences as citizens born into a sovereign Indian nation continued to inform their work despite the absence of a functioning Cherokee state. Contending with a federal Indian policy that attempted first to assimilate, then isolate, and finally terminate Native peoples and nations, these writers turned to novels and short stories, poetry and plays, and tribal histories and editorials as sites of resistance, nation-preservation, and, I argue, nation-building. Rejecting declension narratives of absence for those of survival and continuance, they variously invoke the Cherokee Nation as a sovereign imaginative space, counter-historical trope, tool for internal social critique, and tribal-international model of diplomacy. By attending to the complex ways these writers re-membered, (re)imagined, and enacted Cherokee nationhood—defined here as a people's diverse, continuing imaginings of itself as a contemporary political community—*Stoking the Fire* resituates this literature as a rich archive of Cherokee national memory capable of informing contemporary critical issues facing Indigenous nations and Native Studies.

While my focus on Cherokee writers from this period is born partially of convenience—i.e. the available written record they left behind—I also seek to expand how we think about the politics of intellectual production from this part of the century. In her important 2005 study of Indian intellectualism in the first two decades of the twentieth century, *Citizen Indians: Native American Intellectuals, Race, and Reform*,

Lucy Maddox restricts her definition of Indian intellectuals to "those individuals who were concerned with pan-Indian issues, particularly with the host of issues and problems – both practical and theoretical – arising from the wardship status of Indians, and who addressed them in a public way, especially through writing" (6-7). Following James Ruppert, she reads pubic representations of Indianness by Indians as performative mediations designed to disrupt stereotypical "roles" into which Native peoples were interpellated by turn-of-the-century white audiences. Though Native writers and intellectuals undoubtedly used, and continue to use, written discourse to mediate between themselves, their communities, and the dominant culture, to assume that *all* Native writing constitute acts of collaboration or mediation forecloses consideration of the ways in which it is also put to work explicitly in service of Native communities and the sovereign interests of Native nations. In this project, I explore this other half of early twentieth-century Indian intellectualism silenced in Maddox and Ruppert, while also openly acknowledging that my focus on written discourse similarly elides the voices and concerns of Cherokees at the local level. Building upon Daniel Justice's 2006 Cherokee literary history, *Our Fire Survives the Storm* and Rose Stremlau's recent examination of kinship and community survival in Cherokee families through the allotment era, *Sustaining the Cherokee Family: Kinship and the Allotment of an Indigenous Nation* (2010), *Stoking the Fire* begins to shed more light on the Cherokee "dark ages" by demonstrating how some Cherokees with access to education, social mobility, and avenues for publication attempted to understand and negotiate the confusing politics of

this period.

Lest I put the cart before the horse, I'd like to locate myself within some of the major currents in contemporary Indigenous critical theory that have influenced how I approach this body of work on my way to defining some central terms and concepts. I'll then situate the study with respect to the disciplinary practices, interpretive assumptions, and theoretical positions which have come to organize the critical landscape of the field and explain my own intervention into what I consider some of their limiting theoretical and methodological blindspots. On the other side of this survey, brief chapter summaries will begin to orient readers toward the national narrative of Cherokee presence, continuity and continuance that follows.

"Renaissance" Scholarship, Literary Nationalism and the Challenge of Secular Criticism

To paraphrase Paula Gunn Allen, strange things begin to happen when the focus in American Indian literary studies shifts from a European to a Native American critical axis.[6] Exemplified in the work of Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, Robert Warrior, Jace Weaver, Craig Womack and Daniel Justice, the still-emerging body of scholarship loosely affiliated under the rubric American Indian Literary Nationalism (AILN) has profoundly influenced how I think about Native writers and texts. Theoretically, AILN holds categories such as nation, community, and the politics of Indigenous sovereignty at the center of its critical practice. Methodologically, it advocates tribal-centric approaches in Native critical studies, privileges Native cultural and intellectual traditions, experiences,

and perspectives in developing such approaches, and demands that scholarship explicitly address the political, social, economic and intellectual challenges facing Native nations and communities. Initially a reaction against the culture-oriented work of first generation Native American Renaissance scholarship, and suspicious of the political efficacy of postcolonial approaches to Native texts, AILN redirects its focus internally to the dynamics of gender, race, class and power as experienced within tribal communities. At the same time, it also considers the political and cultural dynamics of transnational circulation and exchange between Native communities themselves, between specific tribal nations and settler-states, and between hemispheric Indigenous populations and an increasingly globalized international community.[7]

This shift in the critical landscape from the ethnoculturalist work of the early "Renaissance" period and the ambiguous politics of post-colonialism criticism has been seismic. The emergence of AILN was, at least in part, an attempt to return an explicitly political mandate to the field. Combining Sausserean/Derridean structural linguistics with Levi-Strauss's structural analyses of myth, early ethnoculturalist oriented scholars sought to identify markers of Indianness in opposition to the modes of thought and artistic forms that they saw as representative of Western civilization. Where writing and literacy was assumed the special purview of European cultural production, orality became the exclusive domain of tribal peoples. Any attempt to identify an authentically "Native" literature would thus begin and end with its relative distance from the oral tradition. As a result, such work focuses almost exclusively on the "poetic," as the closest to "authentic"

oral performances, at the expense of other textual genres and forms. Though outwardly rejecting the social evolutionist assumptions of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth anthropological discourses, early culturalist scholarship ironically recuperated their basic premises of racial and cultural difference by setting communicative markers of Indianness—orality, myth, and the poetic—in Manichean opposition to ostensible markers of "western" discourse – graphic textuality, narrative, and history.

Kenneth Lincoln's *Native American Renaissance* (1982) suggests some of the critical and political limitations of such approaches. As with earlier ethnocritical studies by respected scholars such as Dell Hymes, Dennis Tedlock, and Brian Swann, Lincoln locates Indianness strictly in essentialist cultural practices and markers—consciousness, tribalism, ceremonial time, orality—which are then set in distinct, if implicit, opposition to the western markers of civilization—linear/historical time, individualism and literacy. Native literarature is thus defined in terms of its incorporation of and presumed extension from oral traditions and its expression of an ambiguously defined "tribal consciousness." Seeking to define the parameters of this consciousness, Lincoln grounds the study in a reading of Lakota oral and ceremonial texts which he then draws on throughout as a frame of reference and comparative "traditional" touchstone for his readings of other traditions. Though he contextualizes many of his readings within a colonial history of violence, dislocation, and dispossession, Lincoln concludes that the attainment and expression of a tribal consciousness is less a matter of "bloodline, tribe, government roll number, or pan-Indian politics" as it is "behavior and attitude, life style and mind-set …

in part an idea of self … an internal, even spiritual, self-definition that is registered in daily acts" (207). Defining Indianness essentially as a function of consciousness, Lincoln circumvents complex relationships between tribal-national identity, historical experience, and kinship that remain fundamental to most Indian communities. While later work drawing upon post-structuralist and post-colonial critical theory would complicate the cultural binaries and totalizing "representative" methods that organize Lincoln's text, critics such as Arnold Krupat, James Ruppert, Louis Owens and Elvira Pulitano would nevertheless hold onto the assumption that Native engagements with textual communication necessarily represented a collaboration (if not corruption) of "authentic" Native oral-literary practices.[8]

Evoking what Maureen Konkle terms an "epistemology of ignorance" rooted in the assumption of radical alterity, such scholarship takes as its objects of study culture and form at the expense of politics and power.[9] In doing so, it removes Indian peoples from time/history, confining them forever into a unidirectional declension narrative with its beginnings and endings in an "authentic" or "traditional" past, the escape from which is rendered epistemologically and ontologically impossible. As James Cox notes, such practices exert profound "extratextual consequences," not the least of which is the depoliticization of Native texts and Native studies and the perpetuation of "the colonial effort by obscuring violence committed against Native people, disguising the motives for that violence, [and] relieving their readers of responsibility for that violence and domination" (*Muting* 249).[10] Reading all acts of Native writing in terms of resistance to

settler-colonial assaults against Native cultures and traditions (the "writing back" model) or mediation between Indian and non-Indian cultural practices and epistemologies (the mediation model), such criticism leaves little room to consider the tribal-national, intertribal or pan-tribal politics of Native writing. The persistence of this mode of criticism is evident even in more recent tribally-specific studies that continue to define political and cultural value exclusively in terms of a text's relationship to tradition (the "tradition hunting" model). In doing so they ignore the potential political utility of texts that have little discernible relationship to the kind of essentializing "traditionalism" such scholarship privileges or that explicitly engage modern discourses and literary forms.[11]

It is precisely these tendencies to homogenize tribal experiences, privilege certain forms of writing (poetic/literary) and political orientation (resistance/mediation/ traditionalism) over others, and foreground culture and identity at the expense of politics, power and nationhood into which American Indian literary nationalism intervenes. Some consider Acoma scholar and poet Simon Ortiz's 1982 *MELUS* essay, "Towards a National Indian Literature," as the watershed moment of this emerging tradition. What distinguished Ortiz's essay from other work in the field at the time was its insistence on an explicit political commitment to Native sovereignty and Indian nationhood, its challenge to Native writers and scholars to develop aesthetic and critical frameworks better able to contend with the social and political issues facing Native peoples, and its commitment to account for the rich complexity of Native experience in the Americas. He writes:

> It is because of the acknowledgment by Indian writers of a responsibility to advocate for their people's self- government, sovereignty, and control of land and natural resources and to look also at racism, political and economic oppression, sexism, supremacism, and the needless and wasteful exploitation of land and people, especially in the U.S., that Indian literature is developing a character of nationalism which indeed it should have. (11)

Ortiz's catalog of critical concerns focuses intellectual work on the various and complicated ways in which social experience directly intersects and overlaps the politics of sovereignty and self-determination.[12] In my reading of the four subjects under consideration, I respond to Ortiz's call for a rigorous and interdisciplinary examination of Native writings by considering how each author's rootedness in the Cherokee Nation influenced how they variously thought through and acted upon their individual experiences as Cherokees and Indian public intellectuals in the first half of the twentieth century.

As I take Cherokee sovereignty for granted—which is to say that there is such a thing as the Cherokee Nation comprised of citizens which meet its self-determined citizenship requirements—nationhood emerges as a fundamental analytic category in my work. Arguably no other scholar has consistently committed herself to the principle of Indian nationhood as Elizabeth Cook-Lynn. Rooted in a belief that most scholars fail to take Indigenous nationhood seriously, a conviction that intellectual and cultural

production "contribute to the politics of possession and dispossession," and a commitment to Native Studies' original mission of "defending Indigenous nationhood in America," Cook-Lynn's critical practice begins and ends with tribal nations ("AI Intellectualism" 126, *Why* 31, "Who Stole" 11, "AI Studies" 24). No statement better reflects this commitment than her assertion that "if we are contemporary Indians in America, we have no rights and responsibilities that are not embodied in our tribal nations. In other words, Indians have no Indian rights in America or in the world that are separated from tribal nation rights and specific geographies" ("AI Studies" 20). Under Cook-Lynn's paradigm, Indian identity is a function not of culture or consciousness, but of sovereignty and citizenship—a tribally-specific, expressly *political* identity legitimized and recognized by meeting the citizenship requirements of Indigenous nations, tribes, and bands. This is not to suggest that culture, heritage, genealogy, or command of cultural knowledge and Indigenous languages are unimportant to Cook-Lynn or any Indigenous nationalist. It is simply to acknowledge that their relative significance in terms of Indian citizenship will vary from nation to nation and is thus the purview not of academics, literary critics, or the federal government, but of individual Indian nations.

Extending her critique into literary studies and the "gymnastics of authenticity" that often dominate discussions of Native literatures, Cook-Lynn flatly asserts that "the endless argument over 'who is an Indian' is the poorest coin we trade with as responsible scholars in the discipline because it is not our question to answer, nor our commodity to buy and sell. It is a question which belongs to the First Nations of America, as it always

has been since the beginning of time, not to scholars, professors, agents, publishers nor to self-proclaimers" ("Literary" 48).[13] By speaking of Indianness in terms of rights, and tying those rights to the political sovereignty of Indigenous nations in which they are *legally* invested, Cook-Lynn redirects critical attention away from what Robert Warrior terms "parochial questions of identity and authenticity" and toward those of *citizenship* and *political legitimacy* (*Tribal* xix). In doing so, she is able to hold the sovereign right of Indian nations to self-definition intact while also critically engaging "what it means to be Indian in tribal America" (Cook-Lynn "Intellectualism" 134).

While Cook-Lynn's insistence on nation is crucial for re-politicizing Native studies and resituating sovereignty, self-determination, and nationhood as central paradigms in the discipline, it risks totalizing Native experiences and homogenizing tribal identities strictly as functions of "the national" at the expense of other communities of experience.[14] Recalling Ortiz's call above, it is necessary not simply to hold nationhood and sovereignty at the center of a "nationalist" critical practice, but also to examine the intersections of nationhood with alternative social formations in and through which Native peoples engage the world. Jace Weaver's compendious 1997 survey of Native literary production, *That the People Might Live: Native American Literatures and Native American Community*, models such a critical practice and lends insight into both the advantages and potential limitations of opening up the dialog too expansively.

Tempering the potentially totalizing tendency of nationalist criticism to identify nationhood as *the* legitimate field of Native subjectivity and experience, Weaver

considers nationhood alongside other community formations in which Native peoples exist and from which they write:

> Community is a primary value, but today we exist in many different kinds of communities—reservation, rural, urban, tribal, pan-Indian, traditional, Christian. Many move back and forth between a variety of these communities. Our different locations, physical, mental, and spiritual, will inevitably lead to different conceptions of what survival, liberation and communitism require. (45)

Though Weaver recognizes the nation as a central element in the discussion, he in many ways brackets out questions of nationhood in favor of examining an ethic of communitism, defined as "a proactive commitment to ... [and] valorization of Native community and values ... including what I term the 'wider community' of Creation itself" (xiii, 45). Weaver's focus on wider networks of relationships evidences a concerted effort to account for historical exigencies and individual experiences through which Native peoples have organized and represented themselves throughout history. It rightly acknowledges that nations represent one of many communities through which Native peoples experience the world. If one central element of communitism is the imaginative impulse to reunite, heal, and rejuvenate Native communities out of what Choctaw historian Devon Mihesuah terms the "common core of colonialism," then Indigenous critical paradigms must be able to account for as many experiential contexts as possible that have influenced and continue to influence Native life (Mihesuah xvii).

Speaking of community alongside of nation (rather than in lieu of, or in opposition to it) is useful as a check against the imposition of any one nation's values, cultural and political practices, and intellectual paradigms as representative for all Indian peoples.[15] By eliding the social diversity and political complexity of Indian Country, such totalizing moves deny self-determination by foreclosing the possibility that Indigenous nationhood can be constructed in multiple and distinctive ways across and within a wide range of Native historical communities. Recognizing an array of communities of experience, communitist scholarship resists reducing Indian experience strictly as a function of "the national," and, in doing so, reinforces the sovereign right of individual Indigenous nations to self-definition and self-determination.

As Daniel Justice reminds us, however, expanding the field in such terms also runs the risk of defining community—and, by extension, nation—so that it becomes "amorphous to the point of absolute inclusiveness" (Justice, *Our* 14). Indeed, though Weaver guards against such tendencies by rooting his definition of community in kinship, sacred landscapes, and shared social and political histories, the language used to identify both Indians and Indian communities in terms of "cultural milieu," "way of life," "background," or "heritage" elides the *political* aspect of communitism expressly committed "to serve the interests of indigenes and their communities, in particular the support of Native nations and their own separate sovereignties" (Weaver, "Splitting" 15). This slippage between advocating for sovereignty and guarding against homogenizing nationalist excess presents a very real problem for a discipline committed to the political

and cultural autonomy of Native communities and nations that depend largely upon drawing, maintaining, defending, and reinforcing distinct political, legal and cultural boundaries for their survival.[16] Responsibly navigating this tension is thus one of the central challenges to a Native "nationalist" critical practice.[17]

To recognize this tension is not to force an artificial opposition between Cook-Lynn's nationalism and Weaver's communitism, but, rather, to acknowledge that "[b]oth exist, bound together in a choreography that is not a minuet in which partners separate and come back together but a stomp dance in which everyone is always an integral part of the circle" (Weaver, "More Light" 249). Where Cook-Lynn's nationalism focuses attention tightly on the nation, Weaver's communitism insistently pulls back to consider larger contexts that intersect and overlap with nationhood. Less antagonists locked in irresolvable conflict, they might more accurately be thought of as complimentary, overlapping, and mutually-informing refractions of a larger critical project to address the multiplicity of issues identified by Ortiz almost thirty years ago. Put differently, the challenges facing Native peoples exist on multiple fronts and therefore require multiple strategies and approaches deployed simultaneously. Holding these paradigms in productive tension, as I attempt to do in this study, affords an opportunity to practice what Robert Warrior and Craig Womack respectively characterize as "enlightened" or "compassionate" nationalism: a "secular" critical ethic that at once affirms Native national sovereignty and holds tribal governments accountable to the multiple and diverse peoples and communities which they ostensibly serve.[18]

Nationhood, Peoplehood and a Question of Sovereignty

One example of how this "secular" dialog has opened up the field is evident in recent attempts to reimagine and rearticulate two of its central conceptual anchors—nation and sovereignty—without eviscerating them of their political content. As Scott Lyons, Taiaiake Alfred, and Daniel Justice remind us, Indigenous nationhood has always been more than a social scientific or legal category. It is also the political expression of *peoplehood*, generally defined through ties of kinship and specific historical relationships to contemporary Indigenous national communities.[19] Both Lyons and Alfred, for instance, identify what they see as fundamental differences between nation-state models of governance and what Lyons terms Indigenous "nation-peoples." Unlike Enlightenment formulations of nationhood rooted in the assumption of human conflict, the protection of individual liberty and private property, and sovereign authority derived from the state monopolization of violence, Lyons argues that "[i]t has always been from an understanding of themselves as a people that Indian groups have constructed themselves as a nation," the supreme charge of which is not the perpetuation of state power, but "the affirmation of peoplehood" through "a privileging of its traditions and culture and continuity" (454-56). Approaching nationhood from this angle makes it possible to conclude, as Justice does, that for Indigenous peoples who believe themselves to be not only an ethnic or racial minority in a larger polity but also culturally and politically distinct *peoples* with a specific relationship to colonialism, nation has to be seen not

strictly as an administrative political unit arbitrarily constituted in a document, but as "the political extension of the social rights and responsibilities of peoplehood" itself (Justice, "Go Away" 152).

Conceiving of Indian nationhood both in conventional terms of territorial jurisdiction and political autonomy (Cook-Lynn), as well as the political expression of community (Weaver) rooted in kinship relations (Justice) and peoplehood (Holm, Lyons), transforms how we think about sovereignty. It shifts definitions from the absolute, inherent, and unchallengeable right of states to coercively impose their will on their citizenry, to, as Alfred suggests, human rights-based notions of "personal" and "popular sovereignty" based upon principles of coexistence, self-determination, and a deep and abiding "respect for autonomy" (*Peace* 54, 72).[20] For Warrior, thinking of sovereignty in such terms transforms it from an abstract attribute of nation-states to a daily practice of sovereign thinking and living:

> If our struggle is anything, it is the struggle for sovereignty, and if sovereignty is anything, it is a way of life. That way of life is not a matter of defining a political ideology or having a detached discussion about the unifying structures and essences of American Indian traditions. It is a decision—a decision we make in our minds, in our hearts, and in our bodies—to be sovereign and to find out what that means in the process. (*Tribal* 123-24)

Citing Seneca elder John Mohawk, Weaver similarly asserts that "'[i]f you want to be

sovereign, you have to act sovereign.' 'Thinking sovereign' is a necessary precondition'" ("Splitting" 70). Extending this idea into Native literary studies, Womack draws upon Benedict Anderson's work on nations as "imagined communities" at least partially constituted through written discourse to argue that literary and cultural production by Native peoples has a central role to play both in retaining a sense of national identity and continually interrogating how that identity is imagined and represented. He writes: "A key component of nationhood is a people's idea of themselves, their imaginings of who they are. The ongoing expression of a tribal voice, through imagination, language, and literature, contributes to keeping sovereignty alive in the citizens of a Nation" (*Red* 14).[21] Combined with Cook-Lynn's attention to the relationship between knowledge production and the social, political, and material experiences of Native nations and peoples, such statements suggest that sovereignty is as much "about life and living" as it is politics and power: "it's not about something that *is* in itself so much as something we *do*" (Justice, "Go Away" 148). In connecting sovereignty to the national communities in which it is politically invested, while also holding principles such as kinship and peoplehood as central components of Indigenous nationhood, Native scholars now consider both nation and sovereignty less as rigid political abstractions and more as socially-symbolic forms of Indigenous anti-colonial resistance and agency.

My work is heavily indebted to this still-developing critical tradition and draws extensively upon its theoretical underpinnings and methodological frameworks. My choice to focus on the life and work of the four Cherokee intellectuals examined herein,

for instance, is substantially rooted in Cook-Lynn's insistence that academic work begin from the nation and work outward. That each author was born into what was still a territorially sovereign and politically autonomous Cherokee Nation in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries explicitly and unequivocally situates them as *historical* citizens of the Cherokee Nation before Oklahoma statehood in 1907. Further, their enrollment on the Dawes Rolls of 1906, and the allotments received contingent upon that enrollment, also positions them as citizens by contemporary constitutional standards based not problematically upon ancestral, or blood, descent.[22] This positioning is important not only as a contemporary affirmation of Cherokee political sovereignty, but also as a necessary check against those who read the dissolution of the Cherokee state in 1907 as signaling the death of Cherokee nationhood as well. If, as Jane Tompkins argues, writing from marginalized communities is geared as much toward political influence and social transformation as it is with aesthetics and form, we have to consider significant these authors' engagement with Cherokee nationhood and Cherokee national history in an era when Indian nationhood was considered a contradiction in terms and the Cherokee Nation nothing more than a legal formality for resolving land claims.[23]

As Warrior's and Weaver's work attests, however, critics must guard against transforming a nationalist criticism into an uncritical and intellectually naïve megaphone for Indian nations, and privileging the local-national at the expense of other significant contexts in and through which Native peoples experience the world. Though I am concerned to locate these authors first and foremost as citizens of the Cherokee Nation

for whom nationhood was fundamental for how they experienced and interpreted their world, I openly acknowledge that national political identification is only one way in which Cherokee people self-identify as individuals and as communities. Circe Sturm's work, for instance, clearly demonstrates how the negotiation of Cherokee identity—particularly at the local level—is a multiple and complex calculation of ancestral heritage, spiritual beliefs, spatial relationships, cultural knowledge and marital practices.[24] As Justice rightly observes, there are indeed many ways of being a "good Cherokee," and in my focus on the Cherokee Nation via the critical lens of literary nationalism, I wish neither to ignore this diversity nor to uncritically valorize in all instances how the Cherokee Nation has or continues to exercise its sovereignty.[25]

In many ways, the texts themselves resist such tendencies. The diverse ways in which they model Cherokee relationships and their consistent rejection of absencing, declension narratives for those of presence and survivance demand critical nuance and theoretical complexity. I seek neither to represent these figures as heroic freedom fighters of Cherokee sovereignty nor to recuperate them somehow into a critical model which privileges a particular political orientation. Rather, I examine how their experiences as Cherokees and knowledge of being born as citizens into a sovereign nation persisted in their intellectual work; attempt to understand the degree to which Cherokee nationhood remained a central concern in how they perceived the past, evaluated the present, and imagined the future; and consider what such analyses have to offer contemporary Cherokees as we attempt to imagine ourselves into healthy, productive and sovereign

futures.

Generational Paradigms and Critical Presentism

The period between allotment and the Red Power Movement in Native Studies is arguably one of the most neglected and misrepresented eras of American Indian history. Though there exist many fine texts which examine shifts in federal Indian policy,[26] the emergence of a national "Indian" political consciousness,[27] and the emergence of national Indian political organizations and religious movements,[28] rarely do they consider the influence of the Indigenous intellectual currents and networks from, in, through, and across which actors and events emerged. Those that attempt to forge such connections often force Indigenous activism and intellectual production into historical typologies existing on a continuum between acquiescent assimilation and militant resistance.

In his now-foundational study *Tribal Secrets: Recovering American Indian Intellectual Traditions* (1993), for instance, Robert Warrior situates the Society of American Indians (SAI), with which Oskison was associated, as representing the assimilationist, government supported politics of the post-Pratt generation committed to the goals, among others, of universal citizenship and improving Indian education across Indian Country (10). Though noting that reading SAI-era actors as "simply misguided, brainwashed, self-hating collaborators … misses the point of their achievement," in the end Warrior is unable to resist reducing both era and individual into a project of putting "the best face on the violent realities that the integrationist project was producing in

American Indian communities" (14). Warrior's framework provides one model through which to broadly understand the organization and its associates comparably against other activist moments. It does so, however, at the expense of reducing the political and intellectual complexities at work *within* a specific period of Indian activism to a few "broad" strokes, as well as fully appreciating individuals, like Bronson, whose complicated and ever-shifting politics necessarily reflect the exigencies of decade-long service to Native peoples.

While useful for understanding large shifts in political currents, the generational model's rigid conception of Indian history as a series of relatively identifiable and mutually exclusive periods defined by a specific mode of political engagement limits its effectiveness for other purposes in crucial ways.[29] First, it assumes a linearity rooted in irresolvable conceptualizations of authenticity and acculturation. To label an author assimilationist assumes that there exists a position that is more "authentic" or more "nationalist" in nature, and that such positions are necessarily more desirable and/or more appropriate measures by which to serve the best interests of the people at all times and in all conditions. Sometimes, acculturating or even appearing to assimilate is a necessary concession in order "that the people might live" (Weaver, *That* xiv). More importantly, generational studies often elide the relationship of one era to the next thus failing to account for how a given individual's thought, work, and activism shifts over time in response to changing social conditions and political climates. With respect to the ostensibly assimilationist or accommodationist early twentieth century, there exists an

implicit assumption that those looking for critical engagements with significant issues of nationhood, political and legal jurisdiction, land claims, and anti-colonial resistance should look elsewhere.

Stoking the Fire intervenes in these discussions by examining how four Cherokee writers critically engaged and thought through issues of nationhood, community, identity and sovereignty throughout the course of their intellectual and political lives. Tribally-specific studies like this one lend themselves well to such a project in that they refuse to impose "one size fits all" models of Indian political engagement on individual actors. Just as we must confront the reality that ideas of what constitute "cultural integrity" differ from nation to nation, so must we realize that those very ideas differ in certain ways *within* nations from generation to generation, within generations themselves, and certainly within the life and work of individual authors. What it meant to be Cherokee in the late 1700s differed greatly from what that came to mean in the Removal era, which, in turn, differed greatly from the era in which Eaton, Oskison, Riggs and Bronson wrote. Similarly, what may appear a "fundamentally assimilationist" politics in our own time, might more accurately reflect pragmatic, and at times necessary, accommodations to oppressive cultural attitudes and hostile political currents that were intended to guarantee community survival.[30] Recognizing such exigencies allows scholars to consider representational and political choices Native authors make as a consequence of their relationships to local and national communities and what they concluded were viable and responsible options from within the context of their own historical moments.[31] By reading

Native authors in this way, scholars can better understand why they made the choices they made and analyze the extent to which those choices reflect less attitudes of assimilation or accommodation than strategic defenses of cultural distinctiveness and political autonomy across shifting historical and political circumstances.[32]

Recovery and the Problem of Representative Texts

As with other ethnic literary movements, recovery constitutes an important component of recent projects in American Indian literary history. Perhaps no greater gains have been made in this arena than in the recovery of Native women writers. In her foundational 1986 text, *The Sacred Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Traditions*, Paula Gunn Allen addresses the erasure of Native women from Indigenous critical and literary traditions, which she attributes to "a false dark created by the massive revisionism of tribal life and thought that characterizes American Indian literary scholarship in the field, a revisionism that has trickled down into tribal attitudes and thought and therefore into what the tribes have preserved in their oral traditions" (264). She continues:

> However he is viewed – sympathetically or with suspicion and terror – the Indian is always *he* ... there has been no female Sitting Bull, no Crazy Horse, no Handsome Lake, no Wovoka, no Sweet Medicine. And because there have been no great and noble women in that essentially literary cultural memory called tradition, there is no sense of the part that women

have played in tribal life either in the past or today. (263)

When Native women are present, they have often been depicted through the lens of what Rayna Green terms the Pocahontas perplex – praised and welcomed, on one hand, for her innate nobility, complicity with Anglo colonization, and preference for "civilization" over her own people's "savagery"; derided and feared, on the other, as a violent, filthy, and sexually licentious "squaw" by whites, and a traitor and colonial collaborator by Natives.[33]

Rejecting both absence and politically-charged, anti-Indian images of "meekness, docility, and subordination to men with which ... [Native] women typically have been portrayed by the dominant culture's books and movies," M. Annette Jaimes and Theresa Halsey assert the centrality of women both as "the backbone of Indigenous nations on this continent" as well as formative influences at "the very core of Indigenous resistance to genocide and colonization since the first moment of conflict between Indians and invaders" (311). Work by scholars such as Lee Maracle, Haunani Kay-Trask, Winona LaDuke, Andrea Smith, and Devon Mihesuah have refocused critical attention from oppositional to internal critiques, holding the poverty, marginalization, misogyny and violence that define experience for many Indigenous women as central analytic categories, and asserting the importance, validity, and necessity of gendered experience as crucial for Native critical studies.[34] Combined with the recovery of early Native women activists and intellectuals,[35] and the increasing presence of woman-centered literary anthologies and critical collections,[36] the distance the field has traveled in the

intervening twenty-three years since Green's and Allen's critiques is encouraging, though far from complete.

While such currents have gone a long way to "recover the feminine" in Native studies as a whole, there still exists a surprising lack of attention to Cherokee women, specifically from the twentieth century onward. One is left with the impression that women were all but absent from intellectual and political landscapes between Nanye'hi's (Nancy Ward) and Katteuha's petitions in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries to Wilma Mankiller's election as principal chief in the early 1980s. Theda Perdue's *Cherokee Women: Gender and Cultural Change,* for instance, ends in 1835 with the lead up to removal, while Carolyn Johnston's *Cherokee Women in Crisis: Trail of Tears, Civil War and Allotment, 1838-1907* and Karen Kilcup's edited volume, *A Cherokee Woman's America: The Memoirs of Narcissa Owens, 1831-1907,* both culminate with the impending devastation of Oklahoma statehood.[37] Cherokee women are entirely absent in Denson's study of Cherokee political discourse as well as Sturm's brief treatment of the period between allotment and the contemporary era in *Blood Politics: Race, Culture and Identity in the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma* (2002). They are also elided from this era in at least two Cherokee-authored texts: Robert Conley's 2005 Cherokee Nation-endorsed *The Cherokee Nation: A History*, and Daniel Justice's 2004 literary history, *Our Fire Survives the Storm*. Three notable exceptions are Sarah Hill's examination of the tenuous relationship between modernity and contemporary Cherokee basket weavers in *Weaving New Worlds: Southeastern Cherokee Women and Their*

Basketry (1997), Virginia Carney's landmark study of Eastern Band Cherokee women from the nineteenth through the twentieth centuries, *Eastern Band Cherokee Women: Cultural Persistence in Their Letters and Speeches* (2005), and Amanda Moulder's dissertation *"They Ought to Mind What a Woman Says": Early Cherokee Women's Rhetorical Traditions and Rhetorical Education* (2010). As such exceptions suggest, within Cherokee-specific studies, then, the anxieties to which Allen refers are still very much in play. My analysis of Rachel Caroline Eaton's *John Ross and the Cherokee Indians* and the numerous essays, speeches and political tracts by Ruth Muskrat Bronson begins to fill in this gap in Cherokee history and invites further work on the crucial contributions of other Cherokee women in this period.

With authors such as Eaton and Bronson for whom only a few published book-length texts exist, archival and recovery work is vital to giving them the complex, nuanced readings they deserve. Such work has also proven, and will continue to prove, crucial for reconsidering some of the fundamental assumptions and critical frameworks with which scholars have approached Native literature: that Native writing was a relatively recent phenomenon and thus represented a “Renaissance” in Indian Country, and that as an act of collaboration with western literary forms its primary function was cultural mediation. Weaver right cautions, however, that the “problem with the so-called Native American Literary Renaissance was that it confused critical awareness with [a] material absence” of Native intellectual production in the first two-thirds of the twentieth century (“Foreward” ix). The issue with the second assumption is that it precludes

consideration of Native writing as socially-symbolic acts of nation-building geared specifically toward generating in Native communities what Gerald Vizenor terms post-Indian discourses of survivance.[38]

Work over the last twenty years engaging and recovering the writings of Samson Occom, Joseph Johnson, Elias Boudinot, William Apess, John Rollin Ridge, Sarah Winnemucca, E. Pauline Johnson, Joseph Nicolar, Charles Eastman, Luther Standing Bear, Zitkala-Sa, Mourning Dove, Earnest Gouge, Todd Downing, D'Arcy McNickle, John Joseph Mathews, and Ella Deloria not only gives the lie to the theory of a Native intellectual hiatus. In revealing the limitations of ethnocritical paradigms centered around questions of authenticity and identity, these critical interventions redirect attention toward the relationship of Native writing and Native studies to critical issues of sovereignty, self-determination, nationhood, citizenship, legal and political jurisdiction, and land redress and resource management.[39] Refiguring the "Renaissance" not as an originary (re)emergence but as one instance in a long and continuous tradition of Native intellectual and artistic production draws attention to the historically-specific ways in which Native peoples have *always* engaged "what it means to be Indian in tribal America" and envisioned what productive Indian futures might look like.[40]

My nation-specific work on four un(der)studied Cherokee intellectuals from a neglected era in Cherokee and Native American intellectual histories benefits directly from this critical redirection. It also pushes back, however, against a few critical pitfalls to which recovery projects are prone. The first forwards a recovered text as

“representative” of an individual's work and politics, often in terms of the generational model discussed previously. As scholars increasingly engage such texts, they often neglect other writings across a variety of non-literary forms and genres, some of which present radically different views to those taken as representative. To take one prominent Native writer as an example, such practices have produced a body of scholarship focusing almost exclusively on D'Arcy McNickle's two novels, *The Surrounded* and *Wind from an Enemy Sky*, at the expense of his arguably more nation-affirming “children's” novel *Runner in the Sun* and his numerous works of non-fiction valorizing Native lifeways and tribal structures. In doing so, critics read the destructive effects of colonial contact represented in the former as McNickle's own attempt to negotiate similar pressures from an era immanently preoccupied with such concerns, while giving little or no attention to thematics of cultural integration, intertribal exchange and international diplomacy evident in the latter. In much the same way that imposing generational typologies reduces social and political complexities to neat and definable oppositions, so the urge to recover and publicize neglected texts often has the unintended effect of unnecessarily reducing a lifetime of work to a single textual or historical instance.

A related issue in Native literary studies emerges as scholars privilege aesthetic form over an author's political or non-fiction writings. As Warrior argues in his 2005 study, *The People and the Word: Reading Native Non-Fiction* (2005), such practices obfuscate a much longer and more complex tradition of non-fiction writing geared to both white and Indian audiences. Privileging the novel “as the gold standard of literary

achievement risks making Native literature a latecomer to the feat of modern literacy and literature," and, in so doing, shortens the historical arc of Native intellectual production, erasing both past and present contributions to Native intellectual traditions in non-fiction texts (Warrior, *Reading* xix). Creating a critical dialog between fiction and non-fiction opens Native literary studies by challenging the disciplinary (and disciplining) authority of "the literary," exposing neocolonial relations of power embedded in scholarly practices, and reconceiving Native writing as a politically-oriented, socially-symbolic act of nation-building across a variety of genres and forms. My tribally-specific readings of Riggs and Bronson depend greatly upon establishing a conversation between their literary work and the other discourses in which they wrote.

By creating dialogs between eras of political activism, expanding the field of inquiry to include an author's entire corpus of writing, and refusing the temptation to posit any single author or text as "representative" of a given political position or the overall politics of an era, *all the while holding Indigenous nation-peoplehood at the center of our critical practice*, scholars influenced by AILN get a much clearer picture of what Native writing from this era has to offer contemporary nations and communities struggling with similar issues. In the process, Native scholarship gifts its subjects of study the complex and nuanced readings they deserve.

Chapter Summaries

Because the writers and texts considered here remain largely underexamined, and

because the era in which they wrote is popularly viewed in terms of assimilationist resignation or accommodationist ambivalence, my project is both one of recovery and critical revisionism. Thus, while the dissertation as a whole situates this body of writing as a rich archive of Cherokee national memory demanding greater critical attention, each chapter in *Stoking the Fire* engages and critiques specific disciplinary practices which authorize reductive understandings of the period.

Chapter one, "Citizenship, Land and Law in John Oskison's *Black Jack Davy*" draws upon Cherokee constitutional traditions to revise our understanding of the politics of form in Native-authored texts from the early twentieth century. Published by D. Appleton & Co. in 1926 amidst a radical reordering of Indian affairs, the novel superficially chronicles the romantic trials of two Anglo teens whose families have legally settled in the eastern portion of the Cherokee Nation in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Ostensibly due to the text's seeming adherence to generic conventions, critics have given little consideration to the narrative of conflict over Cherokee lands which runs parallel to and eventually eclipses the romantic plot. Turning powerfully on issues of land tenure, citizenship and Cherokee legal authority, *Black Jack Davy* reclaims the "manifest spaces" of the frontier romance as sovereign Cherokee territories peopled by Cherokee citizens who are governed by Cherokee constitutional law. Doing so, I argue, Indigenizes the form from a narrative alibi legitimizing the US settler-state to a "dark age" declaration of Cherokee independence and a popular case for Indian sovereignty.

Where a consideration of Cherokee constitutionalism allows for a reconsideration of the politics of Oskison's novel, "Negotiating the Archive, Contesting Civilization: Rachel Caroline Eaton's *John Ross and the Cherokee Indians*" emphasizes recovery over revision, as Eaton's life and work have garnered little critical notice. While similar efforts led by Native women scholars have begun to "recover the feminine" in Native studies as a whole, there still exists a surprising lack of attention in Cherokee specific studies to Cherokee women. I begin filling this void in my study of Eaton's contentious negotiation with discourses of nationhood and civilization in her nationalist biography of the Cherokee chief. Drawing on contemporary scholarship by Indigenous historians, I consider the ways in which Eaton's text reproduces dominant, colonialist constructions of "civilized" nations even as it makes significant interventions in Cherokee historiography that elevate both Ross and the Cherokee Nation as legitimate subjects of historical inquiry on par with revolutionary fathers and the founding of the United States.

"Disrupting Blood and the Politics of Recognition in Lynn Riggs's *The Cherokee Night*" draws upon Riggs's neglected critical commentaries on the transformative potential of theater to push back on conventional readings of the play as a negative statement on the viability of productive Cherokee futures. Due to the pervading sense of blood determinism that organizes many of the conflicts in the play, critics have vacillated between recognizing its significance to Native literary and intellectual histories and lamenting what they perceive as its perpetuation of stereotype, endorsement of Indian blood lust, and reinforcement of a heteronormative, colonialist status quo. In their

conflicted attempts to situate the play, however, scholars have ignored Riggs's critical approach to social theater and left largely unexamined a crucial interpretive aesthetic: its achronological structure. Rather than read the play as driving inexorably toward a final authoritative announcement of the death of a people, I argue that Riggs's dramatic disruption of linear time creates a performative space in which to imagine relationships outside of the deterministic and divisive discourses of blood.

Similarly revisionist, "Ruth Muskrat Bronson, Diplomacy and the Politics of Accommodation" recovers Bronson's political writings, editorials and Congressional testimonies as a context through which to read her only published book-length text, *Indians Are People Too* (1944). Despite a life dedicated to Indian education, developing youth leadership, and defending the trust relationship between Native nations and the US, Bronson is mentioned only sparingly in the scholarly record, usually in reference to her tenure as a teacher at Haskell Institute alongside Ella Deloria, or to her work with the National Congress of American Indians. Such treatments restrict consideration of Bronson's life and work to a roughly fifteen year period in a political and professional career that spanned over fifty-nine. Within this limited frame, one might understandably read her life, as many have, as one committed to cultural mediation and political accommodation. However, when placed alongside her later work, informed by her collective experiences as student-intellectual, educator, BIA official, political activist, and tribal-international diplomat, a much more complicated politics emerges. I contend that *Indians* represents less a lifelong political position than a pivotal transition into an

increasingly radicalized politics of sovereignty.

To reclaim these texts as powerful, distinctly Cherokee responses to the world of which they were a part illuminates their potential to do productive work in Cherokee communities. As a Cherokee citizen-scholar deeply committed to work that engages contemporary challenges facing the Nation, it is important for me to connect what I do to conversations taking place in Cherokee country today. My conclusion thus considers how historically-nuanced, politically engaged scholarship might inform current debates over nationhood, citizenship, and the politics of recognition and belonging. By examining how Cherokees from earlier generations attempted to escape the victimizing narratives of absence by imagining alternative futures, Cherokees—to paraphrase one of Riggs's dramatic characters—not only engage how we got here but also assume responsibility for where we're going. Producing work which critically confronts issues of nationhood, citizenship, community and belonging is, for me, the most significant contribution of this study.

Notes

1 Thurman Wilkins, *Cherokee Tragedy: The Ridge Family and the Decimation of a People* (1938); Charles C. Royce, *The Cherokee Nation* (1884); Grace Steele Woodward, *The Cherokees* (1963); John Ehle, *Trail of Tears: The Rise and Fall of the Cherokee Nation* (1988); William McLoughlin, *The Cherokee Renascence in the New Republic* (1992); John Oliphant, *War and Peace on the Anglo-Cherokee Frontier, 1756-63* (2001); Theda Perdue and Michael Green, *Cherokee Removal: A Brief History with Documents* (2004) and *The Cherokee Nation and the Trail of Tears* (2007).

2 Clarissa W. Confer, *The Cherokee Nation in the Civil War* (2007); William McLoughlin, *After the Trail of Tears: The Cherokees' Struggle for Sovereignty, 1839-1880* (1994); Rudi Halliburton, *Red Over Black: Black Slavery Among the Cherokee Indians* (1977); Patrick N. Minges, *Slavery in the Cherokee Nation: The Keetoowah Society and the Defining of a People, 1855-1867* (2003); Perdue, *Slavery and the Evolution of Cherokee Society, 1540-1866* (1979); Tiya Miles, *Ties that Bind: The Story of an Afro-Cherokee Family in Slavery and Freedom* (2005); Celia E. Naylor, *African Cherokees in Indian Territory: From Chattel to Citizens* (2008).

3 Andrew Denson, *Demanding the Cherokee Nation: Indian Autonomy and American Culture, 1830-1900* (2004); Morris L. Wardell, *A Political History of the Cherokee Nation, 1838-1907* (1938).

4 Circe Sturm, *Blood Politics: Race, Culture, and Identity in the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma* (2005), Rose Stremlau, *Sustaining the Cherokee Family: Kinship and the Allotment of an Indigenous Nation* (2011); Albert L. Wahrhaftig, "In the Aftermath of Civilization: The Persistence of Cherokee Indians in Oklahoma," PhD diss. (1975).

5 Daniel Justice *Our Fire Survives the Storm: A Cherokee Literary History* (2006), chapter 3; Robert Conley, *The Cherokee Nation: A History*, chapters 24-26; and Rennard and William Strickland, "Beyond the Trail of Tears: One Hundred and Fifty Years of Cherokee Survival" in *Cherokee Removal: Before and After*, ed. William Anderson (1992), 112-136. Their section about this era, "Statehood and the Struggle for Sovereignty," takes up just over three pages in a twenty-four page article. See also James Gribble Hochtritt, Jr., "Rural Cherokees, Chicasaws, Choctaws, Creeks, and Seminoles in Oklahoma During the Great Depression," PhD diss. (2000); Kerry K. Wynn, "The Embodiment of Citizenship: Sovereignty and Colonialism in the Cherokee Nation, 1880-1920," PhD diss. (2006).

6 See *The Sacred Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Traditions*,

Beacon Press, 1986, p. 264.

7 Central texts in this emerging tradition include Cook-Lynn's *Why I Can't Read Wallace Stegner and Other Essays*, Warrior's *Tribal Secrets*, Weaver's *That the People Might Live*, Womack's *Red on Red*, Justice's *Our Fire Survives the Storm*, and Lisa Brooks' *The Common Pot.*

8 For the turn to post-structuralist and post-colonial modes of inquiry, see Krupat's *The Voice in the Margin* (1989) and *The Turn to the Native: Studies in Criticism and Culture* (1996); James Ruppert's *Mediation in Contemporary Native American Fiction* (1995); Louis Owens's *Other Destinies: Understanding the American Indian Novel* (1994); and Pulitano's *Toward a Native American Critical Theory* (2003).

9 Konkle's *Writing Indian Nations* 6, 32-33.

10 See similar arguments in terms of representation, canons, and canonicity in Parker.

11 See my critique of contemporary "tradition hunting" in chapter 3, note 11.

12 Following Ortiz, critics like Paula Gunn Allen, Elizabeth Cook-Lynn and Jace Weaver have long advocated an interdisciplinary approach in Native Studies as a necessary strategy to adequately address the intersecting interests of sovereignty, legal jurisdiction, land and resource rights and management, economic development, and individual experience to name but a few. See for example Cook-Lynn's "Who Stole Native American Studies?" and Weaver's "More Light Than Heat."

13 To this point, Kahnawake Mohawk scholar Taiaiake Alfred asserts: "Today there are many different ideas about what constitutes a Native person. We know what does not: pure self-identification and acting the part, however diligent the research or skillful the act ... No individual has the right to usurp the identity of a nation simply by claiming it, much less when a collective decision has been made to the contrary. And no other nation (or state or organization) has the right to force an identity on another nation" (85, 86).

14 In his critique of the national foundational fiction presented in Jovita Gonzalez's *Caballero*, Chicano critic John M. Gonzalez points out that while the bi-racial/bi-cultural American national put forward by the novel reflects "a pragmatic strategic accommodation between Anglos and Texas Mexicans," its utopian language of "liberal incorporation" elides the developing racialized economic contradictions emerging from this increasingly modernizing, socio-economic relationship (273). By "reifying 'the national' as the ideological horizon of criticism," Gonzalez argues, "the novel's liberal imaginings leave no room for discussion of the new regimes of discipline and repression

… suggesting a profound narrative inability to account for, and therefore resolve symbolically, the new social contradictions which would arise as a result of the Texas Modern" (273). Taking Gonzalez's cautionary critique that such fictions ultimately "narrate consensus for nation as the hegemony of (would-be) national elites," I adopt Warrior's notion of "enlightened nationalism" as secular criticism, a position I outline further below.

15 In his contribution to *Reasoning Together: The Native Critics Collective*, Justice reads Oglala Sioux scholar Delphine Red Shirt's dismissal of Pequot and other northeastern Natives as predominantly the result of extrapolating Oglala notions of blood, authenticity, and Indianness to all of Indian Country. Not only does such work perpetuate colonial narratives of Native absence in New England by failing to account for the "histories or contemporary realities of these communities." In doing so, it also plays into the "racist inconsistencies and genocidal practices of U.S. Indian policy and those of its invader predecessors on eastern tribes" and "subjugates Indian identity to the slippery perceptions of bigoted, self-interested observers who generally refuse to see even the Indians who, like her, 'appear Indian'" (157).

16 S. Teuton has recently made similar observations about the necessity of Native peoples to maintain, and in some cases strengthen, borders and boundaries. See *Red Land, Red Power* 138.

17 This is particularly evident in light of reactionary claims that cultural mediation and political accommodation necessarily compromise Indigenous cultural nationalisms, and Native-directed calls for strict tribal control over intellectual work and limitations to academic freedom. See Alfred, *Peace* 97 and 103, and Warrior's discussion of the issue of tribal oversight and academic freedom in *AILN* 213-216.

18 See Warrior's and Womack's contributions to *AILN* 192 and 168-74, respectively. For a window into the interdisciplinarity and critical diversity of this kind of critical work, see *Reasoning Together: The Native Critics Collective* (2008).

19 Cherokee historian Tom Holm, defines peoplehood as "a community of human beings that possess a distinct language, a particular territory, a specific ceremonial cycle and a sacred history that essentially explains how they came into existence, how they should behave in relation to their environment, when and how the perform ceremonies, and how they relate to each other within the community" (43). See his "Peoplehood: A Model" (2003) and "Sovereignty and Peoplehood" (2000).

20 For more on the implications of definitional control within the context of international relations and global Indigenous rights struggles, see Jeff Corntassel's "Who Is

Indigenous?" (2003). For a sound critique of the narrative elision of coercive force in nationalist narratives, see Donald Pease's "National Narratives, Postnational Narration" (1997).

21 See Anderson's *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (2006). Womack's characterization of nationhood as "a people's idea of themselves" is an obvious reference to N. Scott Momaday's prologue to his 1969 text, *The Way to Rainy Mountain* in which Momaday characterizes the emergence of the Kiowa people as a function of a collective act of (re)imagination: "In the course of that long migration [from the mountains of the American north to the Great Plains] they had come of age as a people. They had conceived of a good idea of themselves; they had dared to imagine and determine who they were" (4). Chris Teuton, in turn, puts Momaday's and Womack's ideas to work in order to build a theory of peoplehood as a processual, explicitly critical narrative practice of en-visioning and re-visioning relationships and identities in response to ever-changing circumstances and pressures. See C. Teuton, "Theorizing American Indian Literature" (2008).

22 Today, the Cherokee Nation requires documentary evidence of direct lineal descent from an original enrollee on the Final Dawes rolls of 1906/09 to qualify for citizenship. Unlike most other federally recognized Indian nations, including the United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians and the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, the Cherokee Nation does not, as of yet, impose a minimum blood quantum requirement. For updated citizenship requirements, see http://www.cherokee.org/Services/146/Page/Default.aspx

23 Tomkin's sees "literary texts not as works of art embodying enduring themes in complex forms but as attempts to redefine the social order. In this view, novels and stories should be studied not because they manage to escape the limitations of their particular time and place, but because they offer powerful examples of the way a culture thinks about itself … and providing men and women with a means of ordering the world they inhabited" (xiii).

24 Sturm 108-167.

25 In his 2006 monograph *Our Fire Survives the Storm*, Justice considers nation along other communities and methods by which identities are authenticated in the Cherokee Nation: "My working definition was to include those writers whose work is recognized by members of the expanded Cherokee community as being Cherokee—either through community affirmation or tribal enrollment. Those writers who are given particular attention in this study are, to varying degrees, recognized informally by other Cherokees and/or formally by their respective nations as Cherokee. I've talked to many other Cherokees while researching and writing this book, and the writers I've included have

consistently been among those most often cited as compelling representatives of Cherokee experience. Enrollment, while important, isn't to my mind the only significant factor in determining Cherokee identity—kinship and being *good* Cherokees seem to me to also be important" (14).

26 Cf. Kenneth R. Philp, *John Collier's Crusade for Indian Reform, 1920-1954* (1977); Graham D. Taylor, *The New Deal and American Indian Tribalism: The Administration of the Indian Reorganization Act, 1934-45* (1980); Frederick Hoxie, *A Final Promise: The Campaign to Assimilate the Indians, 1880-1920* (1984); Lawrence C. Kelly, *The Assault on Assimilation: John Collier and the Origins of Indian Policy Reform* (1983); Donald Fixico, *Termination and Relocation: Federal Indian Policy, 1945-1960* (1986); Kent Carter, *The Dawes Commission and the Allotment of the Five Civilized Tribes* (1999); and Kenneth R. Philp, *Termination Revisited: American Indians on the Trail to Self-Determination, 1933-1953* (1999).

27 Cf. Vine Deloria, Jr., *Behind the Trail of Broken Treaties: An Indian Declaration of Independence* (1985); Joane Nagle, *American Indian Ethnic Renewal: Red Power and the Resurgence of Identity and Culture* (1997); Paul Chaat Smith and Robert Warrior, *Like a Hurricane: The Indian Movement from Alcatraz to Wounded Knee* (1997); Alvin M. Josephy, *Red Power: The American Indians' Fight for Freedom* (1999); Cobb, Daniel M. ed. *Beyond Red Power: American Indian Politics and Activism Since 1900* (2007) and *Native Activism in Cold War America: The Struggle for Sovereignty* (2008).

28 Cf. Hazel Hertzberg, *Searching for an American Indian Identity: Modern Pan-Indian Movements* (1971); Cornell, Stephen. *The Return of the Native: American Indian Political Resurgence* (1988); Thomas W. Cowger, *The National Congress of American Indians: The Founding Years* (1999); Tom Holm, *The Great Confusion in Indian Affairs: Native Americans & Whites in the Progressive Era* (2005).

29 I draw here on Louis Mendoza's similar critique of generational models as applied to Chicano literary, cultural and political histories in *Historia: The Literary Making of Chicana and Chicano History* (2001). Mendoza argues that "the use of the generational paradigm as an analytical and narrative framework to examine political practice has prohibited analyses of power relations that are not centered around male-oriented social and political institutions" (237). He goes on to assert that Chicano histories, written predominantly by those intimately involved in *el movimiento*, privilege the cultural nationalism of the Chicano Movement "which serves as the standard by which past political practices are measured" (242). My emphasis on the early twentieth century Cherokee writing shares Mendoza's suspicion of critical presentism which holds Red Power militancy as a measure against which to evaluate the politics of previous eras. As Mendoza convincingly argues, not only do such methods unnecessarily reduce the

heterogeneity and complexity of a given era; they also erase "the simultaneity of multiple political generations coexisting within the same community" (243). I push Mendoza's observation further by chronicling the multiple political positionalities individual authors occupy throughout their lifetimes.

30 Weaver uses this phrase to characterize the overall arc of John Milton Oskison's politics in his preface to the 2007 U of Oklahoma Press publication of Oskison's, *The Singing Bird*. I am critiquing both Weaver's assessment of Oskison's politics and the restrictive readings into which such interpretive frameworks force critical analyses.

31 Maddox makes similar arguments in *Citizen Indians*. Unfortunately, Maddox concludes the text by jumping inexplicably from the 1940s to the explosion of Native writing in the late 1960s "Renaissance." Though Maddox's study devotes long overdue attention to the intertribal intellectual currents informing Native artistic production and political activism in the early twentieth century, readers are left with the impression that the progressive period under study is nothing more than a prologue to the more militantly activist, critical aesthetic of the Red Power movement, rather than a formative—and critically necessary—moment of Native national (and nationalist) political thought.

32 Cf. D'Arcy McNickle's gradual shift from evolutionist-inspired rhetorics of cultural adaptation to Marxist-structuralist rhetorics of "functional integration." Where the first at least implicitly assumes the progressive savage-barbarian-civilized teleology of nineteenth-century ideas of cultural evolution, the latter focuses much more on the political, social, and economic factors responsible for the marginalization of Native peoples in the U.S. For the former, see *They Came Here First:The Epic of the American Indian* (1945/1975); for the latter see *Native American Tribalism: Indian Survivals and Renewals* (1973/1993). To be clear, in neither does McNickle assume the assimilation of Native peoples. His shift in rhetoric does signal, I think, an important analytical shift evidencing an awareness of the ways in which culture becomes the reified space of political conflict and struggle.

33 See Rayna Green's "The Pocahontas Perplex: The Image of Indian Women in American Culture" in *Massachusetts Review* 16(4):698-714, 1974. For an early critique anticipating contemporary work concerning the representation of Indigenous women, see E. Pauline Johnsons, "A Strong Race Opinion: On the Indian Girl in Modern Fiction," May 22, 1892. For a study on how Indigenous female images were used in the service of colonialism and revolution, see Jaimes and Halsey below, as well as Phil Deloria's first chapter, "Patriotic Indians and Identities of Revolution" in *Playing Indian* (1999).

34 Cf. Kay-Trask's *From a Native Daughter: Colonialism and Sovereignty in Hawai'i*, Maracle's *I am Woman: A Native Perspective on Sociology and Feminism*, Mihesuah's

Indigenous American Women: Decolonization, Empowerment, Activism, Andrea Smith's *Conquest: Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide*, and LaDuke's *Last Standing Woman*.

35 For example, Sarah Winnemucca, E. Pauline Johnson, Alice Calahan, Zitkala-Sa, Mourning Dove, Ella Deloria, etc.

36 For instance, Harjo and Bird's *Reinventing the Enemy's Language: Contemporary Native Women's Writing of North America* and Mankiller's *Every Day is a Good Day: Reflections by Contemporary Indigenous Women*.

37 Two notable exceptions are Sarah Hill's examination of the tenuous relationship between modernity and contemporary Cherokee basket weavers in *Weaving New Worlds: Southeastern Cherokee Women and Their Basketry* (1997), and Virginia Carney's landmark study of influential Eastern Band Cherokee women from the nineteenth through the twentieth centuries, *Eastern Band Cherokee Women: Cultural Persistence in Their Letters and Speeches* (2005). Though he doesn't examine them in-depth, Tim Cowger's list of Cherokee women active in the early days of the National Congress of American Indians points the way to further research during this era. See his 2001 study, *The National Congress of American Indians: The Founding Years*.

38 For Vizenor's Baudrillard-inspired notions of the Indian as the discursive simulation of the absence of the real; post-Indians as counter-signifying, resistant embodiments of the real; and "narrative survivance" as the discursive medium of Native cultural and political survival, resistance, and continuance, see *Manifest Manners: Narratives on post-Indian Survivance* (1994/99) and *Fugitive Poses: Native American Indian Scenes of Absence and Presence* (1998). For recent critical engagements with Vizenorian theory, see *Survivance: Narratives of Native Presence* (2008).

39 In a series of influential critical essays, Elizabeth Cook-Lynn comments on the need to politicize Native Studies and to reorient its intellectual mission toward these ends. This movement can be seen professionally in the 1999 break of the Native American Literature Symposium with the American Literature Association, as recalled by Gwen Westernan in the 2009 NALS conference program, as well as the establishment of Native-centered literary presses like *American Indian Quarterly, Wicaszo-Sa Review*, and *The American Indian Culture and Resource Journal*. See also Konkle's insistence, following Warrior, Womack, and Cook-Lynn, that Native writing must be considered in political, rather than social or cultural, terms.

40 For an insightful study on the politics of Native drama and performance from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, see Katherine Evans Young's *Staged*

Encounters: Native American Performance between 1880 and 1920. (2010).

Chapter One: Citizenship, Land and Law in John Milton Oskison's *Black Jack Davy*

> We, the Representatives of the people of the Cherokee Nation, in Convention assembled, in order to establish justice, ensure tranquility, promote our common welfare, and secure to ourselves and our posterity the blessings of liberty; acknowledging with humility and gratitude the goodness of the sovereign Ruler of the Universe, in offering us an opportunity so favorable to the design, and imploring His aid and direction in its accomplishment, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the Government of the Cherokee Nation …
>
> —Preamble, Constitution of the Cherokee Nation, 1827[1]

As the preamble above attests, Cherokees have exercised sovereignty and represented themselves publicly as a people through the legal discourses of nationhood and constitutional citizenship for over one hundred and eighty years, a "living tradition" as Lisa Brooks powerfully demonstrates, with a "deep and extensive genealogy on this continent."[2] Though officially recognized as a sovereign people in international treaties as far back as the mid 1730s, the Cherokee Nation found its first self-determined legal and political articulation in the Constitution of 1827.[3] Emerging in the context of intense colonial conflict and persistent threats of expulsion from their southeastern homelands, Cherokee constitutionalism survived the factional violence and trauma engendered by the removal crisis and intensified by the Civil War; endured innumerable nineteenth century assaults on Cherokee autonomy by railroad interests, land speculators, and territorial advocates; and persisted through genocidal policies of allotment and termination.[4] Unilaterally dissolved by the US government in 1907 in the lead up to Oklahoma statehood, a shift in federal Indian policy in the early 1970s from termination to self-

determination opened the door for constitutional reorganization in 1976.[5] Twenty-three years later, Cherokees unanimously voted to exchange the language of tribes and membership for that of nations and citizenship, thereby reflecting an increased national commitment to sovereignty and self-determination.[6] Recent referendums to address the ever-contentious issue of citizenship point to a continued—if troubled—commitment to constitutional self-determination.[7] At times fraught with violence, bitter factionalism, and emotionally-charged debate, Cherokee constitutionalism—from the first written law in 1808 through the 2003 referendum on citizenship—stands firmly as a significant component of Cherokee national identity and political belonging.[8]

Born in 1874 on a small farm outside of Tahlequah in the Cherokee Nation, Indian Territory to a Cherokee mother and Anglo-immigrant father, John Milton Oskison lived through and wrote about many of the singular events that comprise this history. Educated in rural subscription schools administered by the Cherokee Nation, he witnessed the arrival of the railroad to Vinita and spent his early years helping his father establish a successful ranching enterprise before attending Willie Halsell College, a preparatory institution near Vinita attended also by Will Rogers with whom Oskison maintained a lifelong friendship.[9] Upon graduating from Willie Halsell, Oskison was accepted for undergraduate study at Stanford University where he became friends with Herbert Hoover and emerged as the institution's first American Indian graduate. After completing graduate work at Harvard, Oskison relocated to New York where he quickly established himself as a successful journalist, short story writer, and editor for such publications as

Century Magazine, *the North American Review*, *McClure's*, *the Saturday Evening Post* and *Collier's Weekly*.

In 1903, he married Florence Ballard Day, a distant relative of railroad magnate Jay Gould, with whom he had two children (they later divorced). During this time, he became involved in Progressivist politics, most notably as a tenant in and volunteer organizer for the University Settlement, a tenement in the East Side Jewish Ghetto, and as founding member of the Society of American Indians, the first all-Indian national political organization, in which he served as assistant editor of its quarterly journal and later as executive vice-president.[10] Throughout this period, he continued to publish extensively in a variety of periodicals on everything from Oklahoma Indian issues to technological development and international relations. After returning home from service in WWI at the age of forty-four, he married into American literary royalty by wedding Nathaniel Hawthorne's granddaughter, Hildegarde Hawthorne, and was seriously considered for the post of Commissioner of Indian Affairs under the Wilson and Harding administrations.[11]

In the mid-1920s, Oskison stepped away from public political life and refocused his energies on his career as an editor and writer. From 1925-1941, he wrote six novels, three fictionalized historical biographies, and a series of historical and cultural essays about Oklahoma which he edited with Angie Debo.[12] Though Oskison had always located much of his short fiction in Indian Territory—what he nostalgically referred to as the "Old I.T."—this final chapter of his creative life demonstrates a decided shift toward

more explicit concerns with Indian subjects, geographies, and content beginning with his last two published works, *The Brothers Three* (1935) and *Tecumseh and His Times: The Story of a Great Indian* (1938). The former tells the epic story of the rise and fall of a mixed-blood Cherokee family from the late nineteenth century through the early 1930s; the latter forwards a pan-Indian nationalist celebration of the Shawnee diplomat and military strategist, replete with scathing critiques of British military incompetence, US duplicity, and the hypocrisy of federal Indian policy. An unpublished biography of Cherokee principal chief John Ross, purchased by Oskison's contemporary and later principal chief J. B. Milam in 1943, also reflects Oskison's continuing interest in the history of Indian Territory and the Cherokee Nation of his birth. Indeed, at the time of his passing in 1947, he was still working on manuscripts for *The Singing Bird,* a dual-plot narrative of the challenging yet ultimately successful reestablishment and survival of the Cherokee Nation in Indian Territory following the Removal, and an incomplete autobiographical memoir affectionately entitled "Tales of the Old I.T."[13] Maintaining close ties to his family and his Vinita home, Oskison spent the final years of his life with family on his brother's farm outside of Vinita and with friends in Tulsa.

Oskison has to date received scant critical attention, despite a life that Gretchen Ronnow describes as "unusual among Native Americans" that spanned what Cherokee historian Tom Holm characterizes as one of the most confusing, chaotic, and profoundly unstable periods in American Indian history. In what remains the most influential and representative treatment of his life and work, Charles Larson draws upon Oskison's

mixed racial heritage, the "assimilationist era" in which he wrote, and a perceived absence of identifiably Indian protagonists to argue that Oskison's work demonstrates "limited concern with the social issues confronting Native Americans at the time" and functions more as "propaganda" for statehood than a legitimate critique of Indian dispossession and federal graft (36, 51). Larson concludes that Oskison's territorial settings and "Indian heritage," which he "clearly ignores" throughout his work, "played little importance in his upbringing," and that he actively sought to hide his racial identity for practical and political reasons throughout his life (63). In his conflation of the textual and the real, the novel and the man, Larson reads Oskison as a typical (and tragic) assimilated Indian. As evidenced in subsequent Oskison scholarship, including Cherokee religious, legal and literary scholar Jace Weaver's introduction to a recent printing of Oskison's *The Singing Bird*, Larson's reading has largely survived to the present, variously amended but never fundamentally challenged until recently.[14]

In this chapter, I draw upon tribally specific constitutional traditions as a lens through which to read tribal-national literatures and complicate our understandings of the literary politics of texts written in a historical moment often dismissed as assimilationlist and politically impotent.[15] Specifically, I foreground the concepts of citizenship, territory, and law as they emerged in a Cherokee constitutional tradition as markers of Cherokee sovereignty in Oskison's frontier romance, *Black Jack Davy*. Published by D. Appleton & Co. in 1926, the novel chronicles the romantic trials of two Anglo teens whose families have legally settled in the eastern portion of the Cherokee Nation in the latter half of the

nineteenth century. On the surface, the novel follows closely the conventions of a typical frontier romance, replete with the successful union of the romantic protagonists and the restoration of order to the frontier community in the denouement. Perhaps this adherence to typical plotlines explains to some extent why many critics have often dismissed the novel either as melodramatic, popular drivel, or as entirely unconcerned with Indian affairs.[16]

By reading Oskison in such terms, however, critics have thus far missed a consistent engagement with Cherokee nationhood, downplaying, if not ignoring entirely, the narrative of conflict over Cherokee lands and political authority which runs parallel to and eventually eclipses the romantic plot. Turning powerfully on issues of land tenure, citizenship, and Cherokee legal authority, this narrative troubles any easy reading of the text as a conventional frontier narrative with a little Cherokee color thrown for regional flair. Indeed, *Black Jack Davy* is "conventional" only in form. Set in Indian Territory in a historical moment when Anglo/US hegemony was still vigorously contested, the text writes Cherokees into US national narratives and inscribes matters of dispossession and violence attending US expansion into larger national dialogs over American identity and ideals. It also situates Cherokee sovereignty, territory, and citizenship as the legal and political contexts in which both plot lines ultimately play out. Rather than Native political and cultural spaces giving way to civilization's settlement and the Anglo frontier family, the imaginative, quasi-Utopian spaces in which Oskison resolves conflicts are identifiably sovereign Cherokee territories. Where conventional frontier romances go to

great lengths to appropriate Indians into, or write them out of, a US national romance, Oskison's narrative depicts a fully functioning, multi-cultural, politically autonomous Cherokee state.

The novel's appearance coincident with seismic shifts in Indian affairs begs for thoughtful reconsideration of the text within Cherokee constitutional and US federal policy contexts. It was, after all, within this highly charged environment when American lawmakers were beginning to seriously reconsider the prospect of Indian nationhood that Oskison reopened a history many considered long closed and entered the romantic discourse of American nationalism. Unlike most frontier romances, the central conflict in *Black Jack Davy* is not a *moral* conflict between savagery and civilization, but an inter- and intra-national *political* conflict over Cherokee citizenship, land and law. The text thus makes visible the originary lie of the genre: that ostensibly "universal" moral conflicts played out in popular culture and articulated in legislative chambers and courts of law have always been intensely self-interested conflicts of politics and power. In what follows, I argue that Oskison's attention to questions of land tenure, legal jurisdiction and Indian citizenship—written at the very moment that such issues were suddenly brought back to the table—Indigenizes the form from colonial alibi legitimizing the moral and political authority of the US settler-state to a "dark age" declaration of Cherokee independence and a popular case for Indian sovereignty.

Romancing the Nation

In order to fully grasp the enormity of such a project, it is first necessary to sketch out the relationship between US nationalism and the discursive work of the American Western in legitimizing and naturalizing US claims to representative truth and political legitimacy. In Homi K. Bhabha's edited collection *Nation and Narration*, Timothy Brennan and Ernst Renan independently point to the narrative construction of "the nation" as a self-conscious act of creative imagination and historical forgetting. Brennan writes, "Nations, then, are imaginary constructs that depend for their existence on an apparatus of cultural fictions in which imaginative literature plays a decisive role" (49). Brennan's comment points to the cultural work which narratives perform to constitute and consolidate subjects within the ideal of a unified national identity.[17] This project of narrative consolidation is no easy task, however, since, according to Renan, national unity "is always effected by means of brutality" (11). In order to elide the violence through which nations often emerge, Renan argues that collective forgetting is a necessary component of national unity: "The essence of a nation is that all individuals have many things in common, and also that they have forgotten many things ... It is good for everyone to know how to forget" (11). The cultural and political work of national narratives, then, is not so much the revelation of commonality, but the erasure of difference effected through an insistent "forgetting" of initial "constitutional" moments of violence and trauma. Brennan's "apparatus of cultural fictions" can be seen, then, to effect this collective historical amnesia by constructing memories, histories, and cultural

narratives that affirm settler-states, while at the same time containing, repressing, or silencing alternative narratives and claims to representative truth.

Perhaps no genre has been taken up and put to work by so many and for such disparate purposes in the US as the historical romance.[18] Governed by a dialectical binary which orders the world according to easily discernible moral polarities, the historical romance, broadly considered, attempts to resolve or flatten social contradictions through quasi-epic battles between representative forces of good and evil, and does so generally within an identifiable and familiar setting which itself takes on mythic significance. Most often deployed during moments of profound civil unrest or social transformation, the historical romance articulates and institutionalizes a given set of values and beliefs, naturalizes hegemonic social relations, and legitimizes a specific idea of national identity acting on the present but refracted through the lens of an imagined historical past. If, as Harry Henderson suggests, "History" functions as the "imaginative ordering of materials in an attempt at the recreation of experience," then historical fiction—especially the romance—serves to mythify (and mystify) that reordering to shape history in such a way "that create[s] a usable past" for its authors and their readers (9). Historiographic frames thus define and delimit the narrative possibilities in a given historical period whose narratives, in turn, reproduce, reinforce, and naturalize those frames as "givens." The effect of this process is the displacement of historical contingency and political contestation into the ideological realms of mythic inevitability and "common sense."[19] Whether enthusiastically valorizing an emerging social order, nostalgically lamenting the

passing of an old one, or vacillating ambiguously and skeptically between the two, historical romances can thus be read, as Stephen Frye suggests, as deliberate, socially-symbolic acts of "mythogenesis" which seek to consolidate national identities via the (re)construction of "usable" imagined historical pasts (8).

One of the ways historical romances transform history into myth is through the transformation of historically-situated, geopolitical locations into ideologically-invested national spaces.[20] No space has been used so widely and been so influential on the progressivist narrative of US history and national identity as the American frontier. As others have chronicled this development in detail, I don't wish to duplicate their work.[21] What is important to note, however, is the rapidity with which the unambiguously non-national "wilderness" was refigured in the late eighteenth and throughout the nineteenth century into the iconic Western frontier, a mythic site where, according to Turner, American heroic identity and ideals were to be fully realized.[22] What was in the journals and sermons of Puritan fathers a demonic "howling wilderness" to be avoided at all costs, became, in the Cooperian tradition of American romance, that which was fundamentally necessary to enter, subdue, tame and civilize. As Mary Lawlor demonstrates, romantic literature thus contributed to and solidified images of the frontier "as a border zone that harbored mystery and danger, but that ultimately opened onto a plentiful, inviting space where the desires of common citizens, if they were diligent and brave, might be richly fulfilled" (2). By the early 1830s and into the late 1840s, the geopolitical antithesis of civilization and progress—the American wilderness—became *the* mythic symbol of what

would later be seen as America's Manifest Destiny.[23]

Together with early policy decisions, Supreme Court rulings, and an inflated and increasingly nationalistic rhetoric of expansion, progressivist-oriented frontier romances went a long way in naturalizing claims of American exceptionalism through the creation of "a set of spatial and representational conventions that normalized the United States' expansionist project," often with violent repercussions for those deemed "foreign" to the national narrative in a given moment (LeMenager 4). Maureen Konkle has deftly argued that for American Indians this meant a mass denial of even the possibility of Indian nationhood. Operating within what she terms an "epistemology of ignorance" that confines Natives to the past by denying their place as political actors in history, the very idea of a modern Indian nation becomes a contradiction in terms (6). Despite persistent challenges to such discourses by Native peoples on battlefields as well as in treaty commissions, the US Supreme Court, and print, Indian nations were rendered epistemologically invisible precisely because Indian Country was not a located space inhabited by peoples, but rather an ideological locality where Indian savages reveled in their savagery.[24]

By displacing the political components of social history into the realm of fantasy wish-fulfillment, frontier romances effectively "sanitize" their imagined pasts rendering them "'safe' for the reader because they are 'closed off', 'finished'" (Hughes 6). Operating via what he terms an "annihilation imperative," James Cox argues that such practices perpetuate "the colonial effort by obscuring violence committed against Native people,

disguising the motives for that violence, [and] relieving their readers of responsibility for that violence and domination" (208, 249). From the late eighteenth throughout the nineteenth and into the early twentieth century, a great deal of intellectual labor went into rendering as "natural" and "inevitable" what in reality were complex and often violent political and ideological contestations over land, law and territory.[25]

Dismissing romance outright as a bourgeois vehicle thoroughly complicit with hegemonic power, however, ignores its potential to challenge, subvert, and disrupt hegemonic narratives. Despite their normalizing functions, romances "also allow the expression of protest to some extent," and in staging those debates "offer in some sense an alternative view of historical events in question ... that informs the act of literary creation" (Lawlor 131, S. Frye 8). Taking such observations as jumping off points, I suggest that, despite efforts by romantic nationalists ranging from Emerson and Cooper to O'Sullivan and Whitman to appropriate and refigure both Indian Territory and the Cherokee Nation as distinctly American national spaces, Oskison's romance evidences the failure of that totalizing project. By situating the narrative in a region of historical contestation, *Black Jack Davy* offers up what Stephanie LeMenager terms "a species of counter-site ... that challenge[s] hegemonic spatial representations and praxes like Manifest Destiny and, in so doing, inspire[s] revisionist historiography" (4).[26] In his re-appropriation of those spaces as Cherokee geopolitical territories governed by Cherokee constitutional law, Oskison refigures the genre into a narrative instrument of Cherokee nationhood.

Writing the Nation

Black Jack Davy recounts on one level a familiar sentimental romance between Anglo youths who have settled in the Indian Territory as farmers with the permission of the Cherokee Nation. Davy Dawes is an orphan taken in by Jim and Mirabelle Dawes in Missouri before they move to Indian Territory and lease a farm from Cherokee citizen Ned Warrior. Davy soon develops a romantic interest in his adopted cousin, Mary (May) Keene, whose family also leases land from Warrior. The romance plot rests upon the relationship between the two youths and the complications brought about by Davy's exotic and forbidden interracial attraction to Warrior's Cherokee wife, Rose, and the chaotic state of political affairs in Indian Territory in the the late nineteenth century. Rose, who develops a reciprocal fascination with Davy, is eventually forced into a sexual liaison with Davy's mixed-race antagonist Cale Boyd in order to save the Warrior homestead while Ned recuperates from Boyd's unsuccessful attempt to manipulate local authorities to have him either imprisoned or killed. Encouraged by Boyd, Warrior suspects Davy's attraction to his wife and plots his murder, but is persuaded otherwise when he finds out that it is not Davy, but Boyd, who is the source of conflict. Warrior recedes from the story only to reemerge at the finale to guarantee that the Dawes and Keenes put down the attempted takeover of their—and his—lands at the hands of Boyd's father's outfit, aided by notorious IT outlaw, Jack Kitchin. During the firefight, Mary escapes on horseback to seek reinforcements and returns just in time to witness Warrior

enact his revenge. Though Davy's foster father is fatally wounded in the fight, the narrative ends in an apotheosis to his pioneer spirit, the reunification of Ned and Rose, the marriage of Davy and Mary, and the restoration of law and order to the "frontier" community.

Oskison's romantic narrative is thoroughly conventional and the heroic portrayal of the pioneer ethos is exactly what one would expect in a novel chronicling the settlement of the American frontier. *Black Jack Davy* is not, of course, a novel about the *American* frontier. Rather, it is a story about *Indian Territory*, the sovereign territory of the Cherokee Nation in particular, and Oskison carefully locates the text in such terms. Aside from explicit references to the Dawes's destination as Indian Territory, the narrator goes to great lengths to identify numerous geographic markers recognizable to anyone familiar with the topography of northeast Oklahoma. The Keene farm, we are told, lies just west of the town of Grove, and east of Horsepen Creek on the Neosho, or Six Bulls, River. Grove, we are told, is a new settlement east of the larger town of Vinita in the Delaware District of the Cherokee Nation. Aside from these landmarks, Oskison mentions the Verdigris and Arkansas rivers which run on either side of the Cherokee capital of Tahlequah before linking up outside of Muskogee, and also references the larger town of Vinita in the Delaware District. If conventional frontier romances operate largely to empty Indigenous political geographies of their historical content and refigure them as ideologically-invested, romantic-national spaces, Oskison reclaims those spaces as identifiably Cherokee territories. For those familiar with northeast Oklahoma, such

references would undoubtedly resonate. Perhaps more importantly for those not educated in the region's geography, however, this attention to detail frustrates any attempt to too easily incorporate Oskison's explicitly Cherokee settings into conventional, ahistorical frontier spaces evacuated of their historical or political content.

While this attention to detail might otherwise be explained away in terms of realist verisimilitude or regional color, reading it within the context of Cherokee constitutional history reveals an Indigenous territorial politics explicitly focused on maintaining Cherokee control over the tribal estate.[27] From the earliest treaties with colonial officials in the mid- to late-eighteenth century, Cherokees placed a high value on clearly articulating territorial boundaries, both to demarcate the sovereign borders of their own lands and to identify the geopolitical limits of colonial authority. As pressure for their lands increased, and as US officials played one town against another in order to secure cessions, Cherokees began the slow process of centralizing political authority in the National Council, making individual cessions of land an illegal offense punishable by death at the Council of Ustanali in 1810. The subsequent constitutions of 1827 and 1839, which refer to the boundaries identified in treaties with the US as a basis to determine the extent of their national domain and to define the use of national common lands, essentially codified this earlier statute.[28] Article I of the 1827 document asserts:

> *Sec. 1.*–The boundaries of this Nation, embracing the lands solemnly guaranteed and reserved forever to the Cherokee Nation in treaties concluded with the United States, are as follows, and shall forever

> hereafter remain unalterably the same, to wit …
>
> [extended, detailed descriptions of national boundaries]
>
> *Sec. 2.*—The sovereignty and Jurisdiction of this Government shall extend over the country within the boundaries above described, and the lands therein are, and shall remain, the common property of the nation. (sec. 1 & 2, 118-119)

The detailed descriptions of the specific rivers, mountains, valleys, meadows, town sites and other recognizable landmarks between these two sections—whether specifically documented in the Constitution of 1827 or referred to via other treaties in the 1839 constitution and the 1866 amendments—concretely demarcate the sovereign jurisdiction of the Nation and legally codify national lands as common property. Writing twenty years after the territorial integrity of his own nation had been dissolved, in a climate when Indian nationhood and common property were being reconsidered as integral to Indian policy reform, Oskison's attention to geographic specificity in the Cherokee Nation can be read as part of a Cherokee constitutional tradition linking nationhood and territory within a matrix of Cherokee legal jurisdiction. From within the arrested geopolitical frame of the frontier romance—a narrative moment just before the West is "won" via the imposition of Anglo law, order, and civilization on the frontier wilderness—Oskison's detailed descriptions of explicitly Cherokee places lay claim to those spaces as sovereign Cherokee territories under the jurisidicton of Cherokee law, order, and civilization.

If constitutionally-defined territorial boundaries delimit the sovereign jurisdiction

of the Nation, they also establish citizenship requirements and a citizen-ethic of collective responsibility to the land and the people. In addition to defining national lands as common property, Section 2 of both the 1827 and 1839 constitutions defines common land use rights, limits the sale of improvements to non-citizens, and restricts citizenship to a function of residence within territorial boundaries. Though the Cherokee Nation claims collective title to all land,

> the improvements made thereon, and in the possession of the citizens of the Nation, are the exclusive and indefeasible property of the citizens respectively who made, or may rightly be in possession of them; provided that the citizens of the Nation possessing exclusive and indefeasable [sic] right to their respective improvements, as expressed in this article, shall possess no right nor power to dispose of their improvements in any manner whatever to the United States, individual states, nor to individual Citizens thereof; and that whenever any such citizen or citizens shall remove with their effects out of the limits of this Nation and become citizens of any other Government, all their rights and privileges as citizens of this Nation cease … (1827, 119)[29]

This conflation of national citizenship, common territory, and residence signaled a fundamental shift in Cherokee understandings of cultural and political identity. As William McLoughlin notes, while Cherokee belonging had previously been dependent upon matrilineal clan relations, shared language, or regional town affiliation, it also

became in the constitution subject to legal residence within the boundaries of the nation and accession to national law: “The Cherokee Nation was not simply a people; it was a place. To leave that place 'without the consent of the nation,' knowing that the federal government might unilaterally use that action to expropriate land from the nation, was traitorous, a betrayal of one's duties as a citizen and patriot and an act that merited deprivation of citizenship” (*Renascence* 163). Just as the maintenance of Cherokee territory became inextricably intertwined with Cherokee national sovereignty, so the constitutions cemented the relationship between sovereignty, territory, and national identity-as-citizenship. Whether fighting against removal in the 1830s or attempting to reunite the Nation after the Civil War; whether battling railroad interests, land speculators and territorial advocates through the late nineteenth century or resisting allotment and statehood at the turn of the twentieth, Cherokees would time and again emphasize their self-determined, constitutional rights to self-governance as citizens within a territorially sovereign Cherokee Nation.[30] Consequently, “Failure to observe the emerging tribal laws came to be considered as treason in the context of the fight for tribal lands” (Strickland 52).

The subplot of land struggle between law-abiding Anglo and Cherokee farmers, ranchers, and merchants, and a consortium of Anglo commercial interests and annexation advocates bent upon amassing vast tracts of land as a means of encouraging US settlement and economic development takes over the narrative less than halfway through the text. Oskison highlights this conflict from the beginning by explaining the

relationship between Cherokee national lands and Anglo residence in the Nation on one hand, and the machinations by commercial interests and advocates for US territorialization of Indian Territory to undermine that relationship on the other. We learn, for instance, that Anglos are encouraged under certain legal circumstances to enter the Cherokee Nation and improve its land, provided they find a Cherokee lessor and work out the legal terms of the lease with them. Since all land was constitutionally held as the collective property of the Cherokee Nation, Anglo settlers were never officially acknowledged as holding title to the land. They were nonetheless entitled to all improvements, equipment, and livestock produced during their tenure.

This representation is consistent with Cherokee immigration and labor policies in the mid- to late-nineteenth century. In order to rebuild infrastructure and wealth following the Civil War, and to cultivate political relationships as a means of staving off pressure to absorb Indian Territory into the US territorial structure, the Nation aggressively courted immigrants from neighboring states to fill a dramatic labor shortage. Exactly what conditions would be mutually beneficial to all parties involved was a matter of great debate in the Nation throughout the nineteenth century, however. Between 1819 and 1892, the National Council addressed these and other issues at least nine times. Incorporating permit and fee requirements from earlier resolutions, the legal code of 1867 restricts permits to mechanics and laborers and requires Cherokee employers to vouch for the character of their employee.[31] The code of 1881 includes "artisans" as an acceptable labor category, requires US citizens to take oaths of their good standing and of their intent

to leave within 10 days of permit expiration (generally one year), prevents permit employees from hiring other non-citizen employees, and makes provisions for rescinding permits in cases of abandonment.[32] By 1892, the law mandated that employment be "useful" and continuous, rescinded the oath requirement, collapsed labor and artisan into "agriculture," and explicitly forbid the employment of non-citizens in the cattle industry.[33] As the details of Cherokee labor law suggest, regulating labor in a way that addressed Cherokee needs while also protecting Cherokee political and economic interests was a complicated and often contentious affair, made infinitely more so by the arrival of the railroads in the 1870s and the intensification of the ranching industry in the next two decades. The Keenes' and Dawes' peaceful tenure on Warrior's lands, and their respect for Cherokee immigration, labor and property law, is thus tremendously significant as an endorsement of Cherokee sovereignty and territorial legal authority and their voluntary and willful submission to its laws and jurisdiction.[34]

The text juxtaposes this mutually-beneficial relationship outlined between Warrior and his Anglo lessees with Jerry Boyd's self-interested machinations and utter disregard for Cherokee property law. We are first introduced to Boyd as he approaches the Dawes' wagon, still on its way to their Six Bulls lease. Though at first cordial, welcoming and helpful, Boyd quickly begins slandering a Cherokee landowner who we later come to know as the politically astute and strategic Ned Warrior. After arriving at their lease, the Dawes receive a very different story of Boyd from those familiar with the era and its politics. Warrior himself identifies Boyd as "a big fat snake" who, married to an Indian

woman, has become a naturalized non-land-owning citizen of the Nation (14).[35] From James Keene, Davy's uncle and eventual martyr for Cherokee constitutional and territorial authority, we find out that Boyd showed up in Grove twenty years earlier as a stranded medicine show proprietor. After marrying the daughter of Soggy Roberts, "a second chief," Boyd was given a stake and some land, which he quickly populated with a large cattle herd under suspicious circumstances (24-25). What Keene only implies, his daughter Mary confirms, stating bluntly that "Mr. Boyd wants to get hold of all this land between the river and Horsepen creek – more than three thousand acres. He got mad when Ned came in and he and papa made their bargain" (19). Later, after Davy, by now established as the moral barometer of the narrative, has had more than one contentious encounter with the elder Boyd, he comments: "Boyd was a type new to Davy—the deliberately scheming, merciless and powerful enemy who fought with weapons you could not meet with your hands" (98). Through representative discourse, the text confirms such suspicions, as Boyd thinks through "the moves he meant to make" to force the Warriors, Keenes, and Dawes from the land, a plan which provided for Warrior's death and thus the termination of his rental agreements with his lessees (61): "Once I get hold of that Indian's own place, I'll have them fellows out of there in short order!" (62).

Hardly an anomaly, Oskison makes plain that Boyd is representative of an opportunistic, self-interested "type" infiltrating Indian nations from the US. He communicates the seriousness of the threat to Cherokee sovereignty by placing one of the stronger critiques of men like Boyd in the words of an official charged with upholding

both US and Cherokee constitutional law: the aptly named Judge Pease (modeled on the real-life "hanging judge," Isaac C. Parker).[36] When speaking to the Daweses at their farm following Boyd's first abortive attempt literally to burn them out, Pease comments, "It seems that bad men from the whole United States are flocking into the Indian country ... we must stand up straight for law and order. Men like you – and this youngster ... will be militant missionaries of peace, and security of life and property" (17, 18). Embedded in this statement is an implicit though strong indictment of the US's categorical failure to live up to its treaty responsibilities to regulate white incursions into Cherokee lands and remove squatters when notified of their presence.[37] Whether a self-conscious abrogation of treaty provisions or the result of a fundamental inability to discipline its own citizens, Judge Pease's comments point to a failure of US sovereignty often leveled at Indian nations: an inability to secure its borders with neighboring states and to regulate the actions of its citizens. Though Pease's naïve confidence in the rule of law is later rendered absurd in light of Boyd's easy manipulation of the jurisdictional issues endemic to late nineteenth century Indian Territory, he nonetheless expresses an anxiety which many Cherokee citizens, legal residents and US officials felt at the time—that legal and political control of the territory was being eroded at the hands of unscrupulous characters like Boyd.

The challenges to political authority Boyd's character presents in the narrative are writ large in the history of the Nation from at least the early nineteenth century. Similar to their efforts to arrive at pragmatic immigration and labor policies, Cherokees also had to

decide whether or not to admit as citizens white men marrying Cherokee women, whether to set restrictions on marriage, how to determine the citizenship status of mixed-race offspring, and how to codify the rights of spouses and children in cases of death, abandonment, or remarriage.[38] The earliest such law from 1819 required all white men intending to marry a Cherokee woman to announce his intent and to secure a license from the National Council, mandated the consent of Cherokee women to alienate their property, and rescinded citizenship immediately upon divorce, abandonment, or in cases of polygamy.[39] Six years later, in an attempt to account for an increasing number of unions between Cherokee men and white women, a law was passed extending full rights and privileges of citizenship to children of such marriages, effectively reducing the legal influence of both clans and matrilineal authority with respect to political identity.[40] After 1843 Cherokees required all intermarried whites to take an oath of allegiance in which they repudiated citizenship in and protection from all other nations and pledged to "honor, defend, and submit to the constitution and laws of the Cherokee Nation." Though later laws allowed white widows and widowers to retain citizenship provided they remain in and remarry within the nation, citizenship was stripped from any intermarried white who brought a suit against any Cherokee under the Trade and Intercourse Act of 1834.[41]

Intermarriage in Cherokee history is often (and rightly) read as a significant cultural disruption, but details of laws passed over a period of seventy years such as those highlighted above emphasize the potential for political and legal disruption intermarriage posed as well. When combined with the self-interested machinations of unscrupulous

whites and Cherokees alike, this potential was quickly translated into a reality. “In many cases white traders and businesspeople were an asset to the nation,” McLoughlin writes, “since they provided capital, services, and jobs, but most of the whites who sought their fortunes in Indian nations were motivated by the thought that they would have easy pickings among people they considered ignorant” *(After* 67*).* In addition to whiskey peddling, many whites married Cherokee women strictly to gain access to common lands, became silent business partners reaping significant profits, squatted on Cherokee lands, or simply stole Cherokee natural resources such as timber, salt or coal. Though Cherokees had the legal right to expel intruders, or to demand their expulsion by US agents, such provisions were difficult to effect in practice in such open and often unpopulated spaces with unpoliced borders between the Nation and other territories/states.

Measures such as these clearly point to the jurisdictional complications that emerged after removal and continued to intensify throughout the rest of the century. As the narrator of *Black Jack Davy* observes, Indian Territory in the early 1890s “was a chaos of disputed authority—Indian tribal courts, the courts of neighboring states and the Federal courts in many cases each claiming jurisdiction—and outlawry flourished” (167). As a result of easily manipulatable jurisdictional quandaries, the system was beset by corruption and abuse by both Cherokees and whites alike. Despite Cherokee legal maneuvers designed to prevent the consolidation of both wealth and mass areas of contiguous land in the hands of the few, many wealthy Cherokees used the system to lay

claim to thousands of acres of Cherokee lands for agricultural production, ranching enterprises, and resource extraction.[42] As a result, they profited greatly, laying the foundations for a growing racialized class consciousness within the Nation between smaller farming "traditionalists" and large-operation "progressives" (McLouglin, *After* 294). Boyd's attempt to consolidate common lands by manipulating Cherokee legal codes and textual allusions to a substantial resistance movement by conservative traditionalists likely draws upon such conflicts.

That Boyd openly flouts his presumed oath of allegiance to the Nation by openly encouraging the subversion of the social order situates him as the primary threat to the safety and security of the (national) community and thus as the frontier villain. Within the generic conventions of the frontier romance, such struggles over land and the ensuing conflicts between the established order and external threats are standard tropes. Indeed, Henry Nash Smith argues that most frontier romances explicitly turn on the conflicts and tensions between "the old forest freedom versus the new needs of a community that must establish the power of law over the individual" (61-62). These conflicts often play out as a struggle between "the primitive free access to the bounty of nature" and "individual appropriation and the whole notion of inviolable property rights," as well as the debate over the presumed equality of man in the state of nature versus social stratification and class divisions organizing "modern" civil relationships (62). While such readings explain the ideological underpinnings of novels by James Fennimore Cooper, Lydia Maria Child, and Catherine Sedgewick, they fail to explain the politics of Oskison's text.

In *Black Jack Davy.* the community under assault represents neither the "old forest freedom" of the frontier nor the "primitive savagery" through which Indian communities are conventionally represented in the genre. Rather, Boyd's machinations threaten the safety of a fully-functioning, "civilized" (by the genre's own standards), Cherokee political community, the security of which rests not in a commitment to individual land rights but in the delicate constitutional balance between common lands and individual property. Though the conflict in Oskison's text at least partially revolves around this tension between common and private property, the narrative reverses the arc of that struggle: resolution takes place not with the institution of allotment-in-severalty, as US lawmakers would have it, but with the restoration of Cherokee common property law. Boyd's "moral" failure has nothing to do with terminal creeds of "blood" or "race" deployed in the service of US nationalism. Rather, his failure is one of rational self-interest, a willful manipulation of Cherokee citizenship and a conscious subversion of Cherokee property law.[43]

Recovering the Nation

Reading the text as I have from within the constitutional frame of Cherokee law forces us to consider what happens to the Western form and the political work it performs when the threatened community is no longer what Lawlor identifies as "the most powerful icon of the civilization of the wilderness: the settlement family," but a Cherokee political community (24). Since the resolution of contradictions in the denouement is

where romantic narratives put forward their most powerful statements about the moral and political world order, I'd like to close by briefly examining how Oskison resolves his Indian Territory romance, and considering how a contextualized, constitutional reading reveals the Cherokee nationalist politics at work in the text.

The conflict comes to a head as Boyd's consortium of hoodlums and grafters sneak up on the Dawes homestead in the cover of night and engage them in a firefight designed literally to eliminate them as a threat. Most of the tension in the final scene is created by the failure of some of their allies to show up in time due to misinformation, and by Mary's Paul Revere-like ride through the violent night to secure their aid. Alone and outnumbered, only the Keene and Dawes families are ready for battle. J. A., Jim and Davy are the only men present, but in good frontier fashion, the women take up arms and a gunfight ensues which would make even Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid envious. As the fire draws to a close, Mary returns with the “cavalry” and, punctuated by the martyrdom of Jim Dawes, everything ends as readers of conventional frontier narratives might expect.

While such events create a certain degree of suspense by teasing generic expectations, they are ultimately irrelevant to the way in which Oskison actually draws the conflict to a close in favor of the Dawes and Keenes. We find out as the battle reaches a fevered pitch that Ned Warrior, Cherokee lessor to both Anglo families and revenge-seeking husband of Rose, has previously infiltrated the battlefield and set up an elaborate series of explosions disguised in hay bales to short-circuit Boyd's planned siege. In fact, it

is Warrior's strategic mind and patriotic Cherokee heroism, rather than that of his Anglo tenants or their allies—including, significantly, the romantic protagonist, Davy—which effectively brings the conflict to an end, wounding Boyd, killing his son Cabe and disabling their accomplices until the authorities arrive. Almost comically, the "cavalry" sought so valiantly by Mary very nearly misses the entire exchange, arriving just in time to get a few shots in, to apprehend what's left of Boyd's gang, and to commemorate the tragic yet heroic loss of Jim Dawes. In Oskison's frontier romance, then, it is not the heroic frontiersman, the rough mountain man, or even the handsome cowboy—much less the frontier militia or Anglo cavalry!—who comes to the rescue, but the only Cherokee principle character in the text on whose common lands the struggle takes place and who, as a consequence, has the most to lose and gain by the outcome.[44]

Such a plot contrivance in the hands of Cooper, Child, or Sedgwick generally suggests Native complicity, if not endorsement, of white settlement and the imposition of civilization on the frontier. By acceding the arrival of civilization and assisting their white counterparts, Native characters in conventional frontier narratives legitimize the conventions of the genre and, in doing so, depoliticize, close off, and sanitize the violent "extratextual consequences" of the actual history of settler-colonial conflict (Cox 206, 207).[45] In Oskison's frontier romance centered on the struggle over Cherokee national lands and the territorial authority of the Cherokee Nation, however, Warrior's quiet recession at the end of the narrative signals neither a concession to disappearance, nor the inevitable dispossession of Cherokee lands. Rather, in protecting his lessees, Warrior

guarantees not only continued revenue from their arrangement, but also his constitutional claim to those lands *as a Cherokee citizen*. That Warrior's efforts lead ultimately to Boyd's imprisonment, the forfeiture of his vast farmlands, and the sale of his improvements—the profits for which would legally go to his Cherokee wife Rose—restores political stability to that region of the Nation. Read as a national allegory, Warrior's *individual* defense of Cherokee lands, the Anglo residents living on them, and the community constituted by such relationships, stands as a profoundly symbolic assertion—and, within the narrative arc of the text, restoration—of the *collective* sovereignty of the Cherokee Nation.[46]

Further, there is some suggestion in the text of the promise that Warrior might also be a figure of diplomacy and compromise within the Nation itself. We learn, for instance, that just as external threats from men like Boyd threaten the Nation from without, internal factionalism breaking along lines of race, class, and culture threaten to pull the Nation apart from within. Indeed, many of the political conflicts in the Nation contemporary with events in the text are evident in Cherokee law. Measures to restrict white employment, to levy heavy taxes on non-Cherokee industrial interests, and to limit white, black, and non-Cherokee Indian access to per capita payments from land sales point to the intensity of disagreement between progressives and traditionalists, capitalists and populists, and defenders of common lands and advocates of allotment. Though Warrior attempts to work for reform within the Cherokee legal framework, even, at times, exercising his right to civil disobedience in protest of tribal authority, he is also

sympathetic with conservative Cherokee "traditionalists" who have opted out of contemporary politics in protest of what they view as a crisis of immigration and acculturation (272).[47] Recognizing the closing of national borders and the removal of all non-Cherokees as impossible on one hand, and opening them up freely to white settlement and allotment as undesirable on the other, Warrior adopts a pragmatic political approach of alliance with sympathetic white residents committed to the Nation's authority, safety and security. Rejecting neither traditionalists nor progressives, capitalists nor populists, Indians nor non-Indians, the "full-blood" Warrior attempts to walk the fine line of accommodation and diplomacy between all groups.[48] As the only principle character with ties to each of these communities, Warrior stands as a kind of diplomatic intermediary with the potential to keep lines of communication and deliberation open between political factions, if not broker political compromise.[49] In this sense, the idea of citizenship that emerges in the text becomes a question not of *being* but of *doing*, not a question of who or what one *is* but what and for whom one *does*, and thus is not strictly of an issue of *rights* but also of *responsibilities*.[50] In *Black Jack Davy*, whatever future exists for the Cherokee Nation after the narrative ends is firmly, and significantly, in the hands of Cherokee citizens and legal residents committed to the security and sovereignty of the Nation.[51]

While the forces that win out in the end, then, very well may be those of "progress" and "civilization," the victory doesn't depend upon the displacement of Cherokee peoples from their lands or the political dissolution of the Cherokee

government. In contrast to the "epistemology of ignorance" identified by Konkle in which a constitutionally defined, territorially autonomous, "civilized" Indian nation is a contradiction at every level, in *Black Jack Davy* they co-exist in the narrative as co-constitutive elements of Cherokee sovereignty. Such an argument for cultural and political co-existence emerged in the nineteenth century as a central component of Cherokee understandings of their relationship with the US and of what it meant (and means) to be a sovereign Nation:

> Sovereignty for Ross and most Cherokees meant the right to govern themselves in their own way under their own leaders and to expect the federal government to honor their treaties as it would honor treaty stipulations with any foreign nation … The Cherokee constitution, though modeled on that of the United States, *was its own supreme law*. Total sovereignty was limited only by treaty negotiations *mutually beneficial and voluntarily signed*, and treaties were permanently binding on both the Cherokee Nation and the United States. (McLoughlin, *After* 59, emphasis added)

Read in this light, the text's depiction of Jim Dawes's death as a tragic though heroic martyrdom for "the cause of law and order," and its immediate apotheosis of his sacrifice as providing for "the safe structure of civilization for which the best men of the Territory worked, and the women prayed" takes on an entirely different significance, especially when considered in parallel with another Dawes familiar to students of American Indian

history (312).[52]

Henry Laurens Dawes, architect of the Indian Allotment Act leading to the dissolution of Indian governments in the early twentieth century, approached Indian Territory in the late nineteenth century on the assumption that Indian nations were inimical to progress and that Indian peoples must either assimilate or disappear from the earth. Oskison's Daweses immigrate to the Cherokee Nation assuming its survival and are optimistic about a prosperous future as legal residents, if not at some point as naturalized citizens. Where the gentleman from Massachusetts believed that Indian survivals necessitated the break up of the tribal estate, Jim Dawes and his family take up arms to defend the Nation's common properties as central to the futures they envision. And where men like Senator Dawes looked at Indian nations and saw violence, lawlessness and savagery, Jim and Mirabelle Dawes see for their family a hopeful future of prosperity, safety and security in the Cherokee Nation, a "national" vision for which he pays the ultimate, patriotic price. By depicting the frontier community as a distinctly Cherokee political entity, and defining the threat not as savage Indians or over-civilized eastern socialites, but as self-interested Anglo capitalists willfully disregarding Cherokee constitutional authority—and thus internationally recognized norms of sovereignty—*Black Jack Davy* disarticulates civilization with the West, and thus with whiteness, and claims both the genre and the debates over progress as distinctly Cherokee nationalist endeavors.

Critiquing the Nation

Speaking from a Cherokee center at the US national margins, the text makes explicit what Homi Bhabha characterizes as "the mark of the ambivalence of the nation as a narrative strategy—and an apparatus of power" which attempts to homogenize the irreducible plurality of the nation-space into the essentialist (and inherently pedagogical) categories of "the nation" and "the people." Neither the beginning nor the end of national narratives, such categories signify "a problem of knowledge that haunts the symbolic formation of social authority … the cutting edge between the totalizing powers of the social and the forces that signify the more specific address to contentious, unequal interests and identities within the population" (297). It is precisely in these margins of contention and inequality between the pedagogical and the performative—a contested lived space between the "official" narrative of national origins and the disjunctive, local negotiations that resist, refuse, or are otherwise unable to fully realize those narratives in everyday experience—where the "discursive ambivalence" of the nation-as-narration becomes visible.

Counter-narratives emerging from the margins of the narrated nation-space, then, provide a powerful critical lens through which to identify the rhetorical strategies—erasure, displacement, denial, containment, appropriation—by which dominant national narratives deny the plurality of the national Real within the homogenized narrated space of the national Imaginary: "The nation reveals, in its ambivalent and vacillating representation, the ethnography of its own historicity and opens up the possibility of other

narratives of the people and their difference" (Bhabha 300). By exposing the historicity of Indian dispossession and the dissolution of tribal nations not as the inevitable climax of a grand moral drama of racial progress but as the result of self-interested human action, *Black Jack Davy* performs the very act of imagining the possibilities of Indian nationhood foreclosed by the epistemology of ignorance which organizes the totalizing discourse of US exceptionalism.

Even as this move exposes the homogenizing excesses of national narratives, it also argues for the recognition of Indian political separatism within the US—i.e. the insistence on the nation-to-nation/nation-within-nations relationship—and thus complicates postcolonial formulations of nation-as-narration. For Indian writers like Oskison are arguing both for structural integration as US citizens and recognition of political equality as citizens of Indian nations. They are thus addressing two audiences for the purposes of gaining two kinds of recognition: non-Indian readers who will recognize and accept Indians as dual-citizens of the US and their own tribal nations, and tribal-national readers who will recognize themselves as tribal-national citizens in the narrative. Drawing on Anthony Cohen's distinction between nationality and nationhood, Scott Lyons demonstrates that the first gesture toward recognition is an assertion of nationality, "an argument about legal status" in relation to the US; the latter is an assertion of nationhood, "a claim about the character and integrity of one's cultural" identity (*X-Marks* 113). Texts like *Black Jack Davy* contest US discourses and political acts that deny full participation of Indians as citizens of the US at the same time that they put forward

their own narratives of Indian nationhood.

It is perhaps in this double move that the text performs its most important political work, for at the time Oskison was writing the policies of allotment and assimilation responsible for evacuating the Cherokee estate and dissolving the Nation were being seriously reconsidered. For the first time in a generation, Indian nationhood, collective ownership of tribal lands, and the foundations for what would become a reinvigorated principle of tribal sovereignty were back on the table and, like Warrior, Indians themselves were asserting their place in the process. As Oskison would have known well from his own experiences in federal Indian policy activism, any positive reform of Indian law would emerge as the result of cooperative alliances between Indian activists and Anglo lawmakers alike. Perhaps the text's ironic treatment of the Dawes family is an invitation to a new generation of federal law makers to forge a different path than their predecessors chose, one that would work with Indian people rather than against them, and would value their philosophies of governance rather than dismiss them. Together with its insistence on Cherokee territorial authority, law, and citizenship, the novel's portrait of the Cherokee Nation as a functioning, sovereign, and multicultural state presents a powerful argument for the reinvestment of land and sovereignty in whatever form of Indian nationhood might potentially emerge out of those reform efforts.

Though the promise of Indian policy reform was never fully realized, and though it would take the Cherokee Nation another fifty years to officially reorganize as a sovereign nation-people, in looking back, *Black Jack Davy* imagines the possibility and

promise of what a renewed Cherokee Nation might look like. Make no mistake, it is not a perfect vision. Its restrictive positioning of women as either idealized subjects of Christian virtue or racially-coded objects of male sexual desire, and its almost total erasure of significant Afro-descendant characters and communities present significant problems for any contemporary reading of the novel. Though the text ostensibly imagines a Cherokee Nation open to anyone committed to the political autonomy and legal integrity of the state regardless of ethnic or cultural descent, it clearly conceives of its ideal citizen in strictly racialized and gendered terms.[53] There are no Nanye'his on the Neosho, no models from which a future Ruth Bronson or Wilma Mankiller might emerge to lead the Nation. Similarly, there appears to be no place for citizens of African descent outside of domestic service or agricultural labor, much less on national councils or judicial benches. In the "national" narrative of land, law, and citizenship I've been arguing for here, both blacks and women are troublingly relegated to the Cherokee national narrative margins.

As unappealing as such elements may be to contemporary critical and political tastes, they nonetheless capture and make visible the complexities of Cherokee constitutionalism and its effects for how some Cherokees understood, experienced and imagined nationhood and citizenship even after the dissolution of the tribal state. While I have not been able to give full attention to these issues in my analysis here, they beckon further scholarly attention not just to the content of national concepts evident in the text, but also to the historical, social, legal and political processes through which such

concepts, ideas, and practices emerge. If we buy into Renan's and Brennan's observations that nations are constituted in moments of violence which must then perpetually be erased, denied or naturalized through an "apparatus of cultural fictions," then the place of constitutions and legal codes as part and parcel of that consolidating apparatus must be critically considered. Doing so allows us not only to reveal the "rule of law" as a legal construct continually in the process of articulation and codification (and thus continually up for review, revision and change); it also focuses critical attention on the complicated ways in which Indian-authored texts can at once speak back powerfully to hegemonic discourses from the colonial margins even as they silence those similarly marginalized within their own national borders.[54] If the Cherokee Nation Oskison recalled and the national imaginary he drew upon was at least partially the product of the constitutional history I've attempted to recount here, the text's marginalization of women and blacks might fruitfully be interrogated as a narrative translation of their similar exclusion from full-participant citizenship in a thoroughly racialized and gendered Cherokee constitutional tradition.

Indeed, shifting the lens from questions of nationality to nationhood forces a consideration of the ways in which narratives of Indian nationhood, resistant as they may be to dominant nationalist discourses, reproduce many of the same totalizing excesses, ambiguities and ambivalences. If, in looking back, *Black Jack Davy* imagines the possibility and promise of what a renewed Cherokee Nation might look like, the question now becomes one of the content of nationhood the text imagines, the ways in which it

defines the "character and integrity" of Cherokee national identity, and what kind of ideal citizen such discourses ultimately produce. To the extent that a constitutional framework can contribute significantly to studies of Native literatures and other cultural productions, it will probably rest on engaging internal issues such as these as a means of informing and historicizing contemporary discussions of nationhood and citizenship within and among Indian nations themselves.

Despite its many imperfections, *Black Jack Davy* is a significant text of American Indian letters, not only for its intervention into American romantic nationalist discourses, but also for its imaginative and hopeful engagement with Indian nationhood. In fact, its insistence on Cherokee nationhood suggests that while the past is undoubtedly the prelude to the present, it need not overdetermine how we imagine the future. It is a story not of the tragic and inevitable demise of the Cherokee Nation but of its restoration and its right to exist on its own terms. It is a narrative not about the Utopian resolution of all conflicts, but about Cherokees and non-Indian allies alike wrestling openly with those issues on the way toward a more hopeful future for Cherokee communities and the Cherokee Nation. That hope, that fire which Cherokees believe holds us together as a people, continues to burn in the Cherokee Nation today, not least evident in the preamble to the revised 1999 Constitution:

> We, the people of the Cherokee Nation, in order to preserve our sovereignty, enrich our culture, achieve and maintain a desirable measure of prosperity and the blessings of freedom, acknowledging with humility

> and gratitude the goodness, aid and guidance of the Sovereign Ruler of the Universe in permitting us to do so, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the Government of the Cherokee Nation.[55]

Read within the long and continuous tradition of Cherokee constitutionalism and Cherokee law, *Black Jack Davy* is much more than popular, assimilationist drivel. Rather, to borrow from Lisa Brooks, it is one Cherokee's imaginative deliberation of nationhood, an attempt "to think with one mind, with regard for the whole, including those kin yet unborn" (57-59). The fact that Oskison didn't get it entirely right should in no way diminish the significance of the attempt. Nations are always, after all, in the process of self-definition that depends at once on trying to hold onto what is right and just while accounting and making up for mistakes and missteps incurred along the way. Though an imperfect narrative, *Black Jack Davy* is the "story of quiet happiness" that Warrior vows to write, a distinctly *Cherokee* story of land, law, citizenship and sovereignty—a complicated, contentious, yet hopeful story that is still being written today.

Notes

1 For the Cherokee Constitution, see *Laws of the Cherokee Nation* reprinted by Scholarly Resources, 1973. All subsequent references to Cherokee constitutions and Cherokee laws are from this series, hereafter cited as *LCN* (date), pg#.

2 I follow here Scott Lyons' definition of rhetorical sovereignty as "the inherent right and ability of peoples to determine their own communicative needs and desires … to decide for themselves the goals, modes, styles and languages of public discourse" ("What" 450).

3 While some argue that the US and other European states never truly viewed Native peoples as sovereign entities and engaged in treaty-making strictly as a pragmatic tactic to legally take possession of Indigenous lands, Yankton Dakota scholar Vine Deloria, Jr. dismisses such notions outright. Noting the Europeans' sparse populations in the early colonial era as necessitating diplomatic engagement, trade, and military alliance with America's Indigenous populations, Deloria argues: "It is useless to argue that these diplomatic instruments lacked international status. Because the treaties and agreements dealt with lands and peoples outside of Europe that we being invaded by Europeans, there was not question that the agreements had international scope. Whether or not they might have been recognized in European court as binding on European monarchs is a moot question; historical events simply precluded its being raised and answered" (6). Deloria and Lytle 2-3. For a distilled review of precedents in international and US law as they apply to Native peoples, see Deloria and David E. Wilkins, *Tribes, Treaties and Constitutional Tribulations*, 1999.

4 Strickland writes that "the Cherokee legal system did not spring forth as a mature instrument. The historical development of Cherokee law ways illustrates the process of gradual evolution building upon existing social institutions. That the Cherokees pursued slows and systematic adaptation is … a tribute to the wisdom of tribal leadership. For, in this way, the early and less sophisticated procedures of the tribal regulators and light-horsemen built a firm foundation for the more complex written constitution and tribal courts" (72). In her essay on Indigenous constitutional traditions, Brooks notes that "[c]onstitutional literature often emerges during a period of transition, during which 'the people' are undergoing a significant transformation, when there is a pressing need for consolidation and unification, and a strong desire for the articulation and formation of principles that can chart the course of the emerging or changing nation" (55). For more on such contexts in Cherokee history generally, see R. Strickland, McLoughlin, Sturm, and Denson. For nineteenth century assaults on Indian sovereignty in Indian Territory, see Debo and Carter.

5 While the Cherokee Nation did not reorganize under the Oklahoma Indian Welfare Act (OIWA) of 1936, the United Keetoowah Band did in 1950. The Eastern Band of the Cherokee Nation continues to operate under its 1889 North Carolina state charter, and never officially reorganized under the Indian Reorganization Act (IRA) of 1934.

6 Other important revisions include replacing the federal subjection clause with an affirmation of sovereignty and mutually beneficial relations with the US (Art I), re-instituting jurisdictional boundaries (Art II), clearly identifying citizenship criteria (Art IV), and refiguring the Judicial Appeals Tribunal as the Cherokee Supreme Court (Art VIII). For the most recent version of the constitution, see http://www.cherokee.org/Docs/TribalGovernment/Executive/CCC/2003_CN_CONSTITUTION.pdf.

7 For more on the complex history of Cherokee-black relations, see Halliburton, Littlefield, Perdue, Sturm, Miles, Naylor, and Yarborough.

8 I do not mean here to suggest that the Nation is the horizon of experience and identity for all Cherokee people. In fact, for some, filiation to a family or clan and affiliation with specific civil and spiritual communities constitute primary sources of community and individual identity. See Sturm 108-200.

9 In his unpublished autobiography, Oskison writes of his trip to the Chicago World's Fair with Rogers and other classmates. Where Oskison recounts “riding the rails” to the fair, Rogers remembers accompanying his father Clem to Chicago on a business trip. Regardless of the details of this and other events, Oskison valued this relationship throughout his life. An inscription to Will Rogers from Oskison's 1935 novel *Brothers Three* reads: “For Will Rogers—in memory of our school days together at Willie Halsell, and of a period in the old Indian Territory that we both knew and, I hope, loved. Cordially —*as one Cherokee to another*—yours,” (emphasis added). Looking back at his time at Willie Halsell, Rogers remarked with characteristic humor of Oskison: “I believe that John Oskison was the only one we really got educated, but they taught a lot of 'em to go out and lead fine useful lives to their communities” (109). *Papers of Will Rogers, Vol. 1, November 1879-April 1902*. For a tribally-specific study of Will Rogers' life and work, see Amy Ware's *The Cherokee Kid: A Study of Tribal Influence on American Popular Culture* forthcoming from University of Kansas Press (2013)..

10 This transformation was accomplished legally through unilateral federal legislation beginning with the General Allotment Act of 1887, and the Curtis Act of 1898 and continuing through the Burke Act of 1906 and the Oklahoma Act of Union in 1907.

11 Hertzberg 189.

12 *Wild Harvest: A Novel of Transition Days in Oklahoma* (1925), *Black Jack Davy* (1926), *A Texas Titan: The Story of Sam Houston* (1929), *Brothers Three* (1935), *Tecumseh and His Times: The Story of a Great Indian* (1938), *Oklahoma: A Guide to the Sooner State* (1941). A collection of oral tradition narratives compiled from notes collected during an extensive trip throughout the Southwest and across Indian Territory in 1914 was later published by Jack Gregory and Rennard Strickland under the title *American Indian Spirit Tales* (1974). Additionally, according to archival information obtained from the J. B. Milam collection at the University of Tulsa, Oskison penned two other novels, *Vision Victorious* (1931) and *The Lone Rider* (1933) that apparently went unpublished. I've been unable to gain any further information about these texts.

13 Though often characterized as living in kind of self-imposed exile, Oskison actually maintained strong connections to Oklahoma and his Cherokee relations. In addition to serving on organizing committees for the Vinita Pioneer Days Festival and Willie Halsell College reunions, he also advised and consulted with Randal Davey on six murals memorializing Cherokee history installed at the Vinita Post Office on January 23, 1941. *Story of Craig County: Its People and Places* (1984): 87, 604. An obituary notice from an unidentified Tulsa newspaper more accurately captures Oskison's relationship to home and its influence on his writing: “It was significant that John Oskison, despite his wide travels in this country and abroad, never left—in spirit—the old I.T. […] He came home to Vinita to write his best books.”

14 Focusing specifically on recognizable Indian characteristics, Bernd Peyer notes that “only a few stories have an Indian subject,” a sentiment echoed by Priscilla Oaks who observes that “no specific Indian characteristics are attributed to the central characters.” Andrew Widget, in *Native American Literature* (1985), similarly charges that Oskison relegates Native characters to the narrative margins and offers “little insight into Indian life or concerns” ostensibly to satisfy mass market Western conventions and audience expectations. In her contribution to Paula Gunn Allen’s 1983 *Studies in American Indian Literatures*, and later in her own 1990 *American Indian Literatures,* LaVonne Ruoff notes Oskison’s concern more “with Oklahoma economic and social history” than with things Indian, though she does observe an important oppositional rhetorical shift that occurs in his 1938 biography of Tecumseh. She carries this reading into her 2005 contribution to the *Cambridge Companion to Native American Literatures*, supplementing it with a mention of the recently discovered *Singing Bird* which she characterizes as Oskison’s most “Indian-centered” text. In *The Sacred Hoop* (1986), Paula Gunn Allen interprets Oskison in similar terms, though identifying in his *Brothers Three* an early treatment of racism and prejudice experienced by “breeds.” Kathleen Whitson, in her 1999 *Native American Literatures: an Encyclopedia*, also reads Oskison’s work as reflecting an “obvious” commitment to assimilation as “a partial solution to the ‘Indian problem’”

(250). In the introduction mentioned here, Weaver admits that Oskison's politics are "complex" but identifies in his life and work "an overall assimilationlist trajectory" (xi, xii). Citing Oskison's involvement in "aggressively assimilationist" organizations like the Society of American Indians, and pointing to Oskison's habit of casting white characters as protagonists, Weaver questions the subversive potential of the text, and by implication Oskison's entire body of work, arguing that it is as much a story about the redemption of its white characters as they become progressively more "Indian" as it is about the survival, continuance, and renewal of a sovereign Cherokee Nation.

Gretchen Ronnow's contribution to Andrew Wiget's 1994 *Dictionary of Native American Literatures* is the first critical statement to identify a number of linguistic ambiguities and ideological cross-purposes pervading his work. Her dissertation, *John Milton Oskison: Native American Modernist*, analyzes the disruption of conventional western narrative conventions in his short stories, particularly his consistent use of embedded textuality and modernist narrative personae. Justice's *Our Fire Survives the Storm* (2005) was the first text to locate Oskison within an explicitly Cherokee literary tradition, though he reads Oskison in more ambivalent terms than I do here. In their critical introduction to *The Singing Bird,* editors Smith and Mullikin identify a subversive undercurrent in Oskison's later work. I here build upon and push the limits of this scholars to argue for a much stronger nationalist reading of *Black Jack Davy* specifically and of Oskison's work more generally.

15 For the early twentieth century as a distinctly non-nationalist period of Indian political reform, see Hertzberg 30-134 and Cornell 115-118. For a characterization of the period as overtly assimilationist, see Larson 10-11, 37, 169 and Warrior, *Tribal* 5-14. For readings that problematically conflate period politics with intellectual production, see Warrior's and Weaver's treatments of Oskison, respectively 21 and 11-12. As Chad Allen, Tom Holm and Lucy Maddox have shown, such approaches to Native politics and intellectual production of the early twentieth century not only elide the diversity and complexity of Native political positions. They also prevent rigorous analyses which consider rhetoric and form as strategic responses attending inequitable power relations. See Allen 25-42, 73-106; Holm 50-84; and Maddox 7, 14-16. Such frames, I believe, have thus far prevented scholars from seriously engaging the political implications of texts which don't fit neatly into contemporary critical practices or conform ideally to contemporary political preferences.

16 For a critique of the aesthetic merit of Oskison's work and various treatments of the politics of "Indianness" in his novels, see A. Strickland 126; Larson 46-55; Oaks 63-64; Widget 66-74; P. Allen 76-77; Peyer xvi; Ruoff, "American" 71 and "Native" 151-53; Whitson 250; and Weaver xi-xii.

17 To this point, Benedict Anderson has argued persuasively that print culture –

primarily through newspapers and popular novels – was largely responsible for the formation of national identity by allowing previously disconnected individuals and social groups to see one another as "imagined communities" within a larger national state order.

18 The foundational statement on the historical novel remains George Lukacs's monograph of the same name, while Northrup Frye's and *The Anatomy of Criticism* (1957) and *The Secular Script: A Study of the Structure of Romance* (1976) are the beginning points of any critical conversation about the romance more broadly. A selective list of studies focusing on the historical romance generally and the American historical romance specifically include Bell, Henderson, Dekker, Hughes, and S. Frye.

19 I draw here on the work of Edward Said and Stuart Hall concerning the processes by which discourse and ideology frame common sense understandings of the world. Said characterizes the relationship between colonial intellectual production and representation as one which institutionalizes and normalizes racialized epistemological categories in order to consolidate and reproduce inequitable power relations through the construction of "an interreferrential mass of textual authority" about colonial Others (20). For Hall, this "selective construction of social knowledge" produces an ideological field that effectively frames hegemonic truth claims "within [a dominant] horizon of thought" such that contestation and contingency are elided (333, 334).

20 Critical work on the relationship between spatial conceptualizations, epistemological categories and narrative possibilities are crucial to my understanding of the cultural work Westerns perform to consolidate settler-state hegemony in US popular culture and the significance of Oskison's intervention in the genre. In *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Michel de Certeau distinguishes between places as physical geographies, or locations, defined by their topography, geographical features, and location on a map, and spaces, which he views as places inhabited by peoples and transformed by practices of human interaction, interpretation, and experience. No longer disembodied physical landmarks or points on a map, places are transformed by human action into ideologically-invested, "practiced space[s]." Just as maps—as disembodied, "objective" representations of the Real—erase the itineraries, intentions, investments and interactions of those responsible for their creation, nationalist-oriented genres like the frontier romance similarly depoliticize the contexts of their emergence, contributing to the erasure of conflict, violence, and contestation which define their conditions of production and existence. As Edward Soja argues, while "space itself may be primordially given ... the organization and the meaning of space is a product of social translation, transformation, and experience" (80). What spatial theory seeks to render clear, then, is "how relations of power and discipline are inscribed into the apparently innocent spatiality of social life, how human geographies become filled with politics and ideology" (5). When the political geographies of the "little-a" americas were transformed into the ideologically-

invested spaces of the New England Wilderness and the American West, they, and the Native peoples that inhabited them, were summarily emptied of their historical-situatedness and elevated to the status of mythic, philosophical abstraction.

21 See for example Nash Smith, Pearce, Berkhofer, Drinnon, and Huhdorf.

22 In his foundational study on the topic, Henry Nash Smith illustrates how in the early literature of the colonies, the American west was depicted as a moral and materially-threatening "Devil's Den" of sin and depravity (4). Partially due to anxieties that "savage" environments would encourage cultural regression, and partially due to the practical realities of British colonial interest, settlement of the interior, and thus its imaginative construction as a desirable location, was virtually ignored. With American independence, however, the wilderness is gradually transformed into the Western frontier, an idealized, imagined space of freedom, liberty, and plenty—what Smith refers to as the myth of the Garden—where opportunity abounds and social hierarchies are abolished (at least for whites) for those enterprising pioneers willing to take up the Puritan-cum-boot strap ethic.

23 The frontier/West, and the Boonean-Cooperian western hero, were thus born, conceived contradictorily as at once arbiters of and pathbreakers for progress and civilization while also serving as its most profound critics and resistant elements, "a symbol of anarchic freedom, an enemy of law and order" (Smith 60). Noting that to light out for the territory is essentially a rejection of civilization's progressive, westward-directed settlement, Smith argues that the idealization of the West suggests an anxiety and suspicion of "progress" and "civilization" (52). In what he terms "the cult of Manifest Destiny," such romantic nostalgia for a presumably lost era is nothing more "than a self-indulgent affectation" meant to support the self-congratulating rhetoric of progress and civilization's triumph over savagery and barbarism (52). "The West," Smith writes, "is, grandly and abstractly, a place where afflicted humanity raises her drooping head; where conscience ceases to be a slave, and laws are no more than the security of happiness" (130).

24 I draw here on Michel Rolph Trouillot's examination of the relationship between spatial conceptualization and narrative possibility where location refers to "a place that has been situated, localized if not always located" in reference to other peoples and places; "locale" marks "a venue, a place defined primarily by what happens there;" and "locality" references "a site defined by its human content, most likely a discreet population" (122, 123). Where location is dependent upon establishing social and historical relationships to other locations and peoples, in their essentially aestheticizing moves, both locale and locality obfuscate those relationships. In doing so, they fail to consider the multiple ways in which narrative locales and localities function in reality not

as ahistorical aesthetic categories, but as “contested sites” of social interaction and material conflict (123). I contend that Oskison's attention to constitutionally-defined Cherokee territories and identifable Cherokee locations and communities repoliticizes Indian Territory and the Cherokee Nation as sites of social, political, and legal contestation.

25 The popular apotheosis of the West as the privileged site of American imperial designs, and the official “kidnapping” of the American romance by patriotic nationalism, is perhaps best articulated in the mid-nineteenth century essays of John L. O'Sullivan published in *The United States Magazine and Democratic Review*. His 1839 article, “The Great Nation of Futurity,” signals the emergence of that strand of American romanticism which turns to the past not as an imaginative space to contemplate (and complicate) the present, but as a launching pad from the past into a progressivist future utopia. Written in the same year as the Cherokees completed their forced march to Indian Territory at US army gunpoint, O'Sullivan's text amazingly elides not only the contradictions of America's historical *past*, but central and widely-publicized debates over Indian removal that dominated his historical *present*. In “Annexation,” published in the same journal six years later during the debates over the Mexican-American war, O'Sullivan looks further west to Texas, Oregon and California as the next logical steps in the fulfillment of what he would infamously characterize as the “manifest destiny” of the United States (5).

26 Drawing on Richard White's idea of the “middle ground” in colonial America, LeMenager argues that by remembering, returning to, and reinscribing middle ground spatialities, writers make visible the remaining “inconsistencies, reversals and doubts” embedded in the seemingly inevitable, inexorable, progressivist vision of American (imperial) expansion (4, 5). In refusing “to naturalize the westward course of empire,” such texts “reveal the fissures in that symbolism” and “[reopen] the nineteenth century to counter-narratives that are now more readily associated with colonial and early national contexts” (5-6).

27 See Strickland 51. McLoughlin draws similar conclusions, noting that “nationalism among the Cherokees, as well as the demand for sovereignty (self-government under their own laws and chiefs and with communal ownership of land guaranteed by the federal government), was in part an effort to use the European concept of nationhood to defend their freedom and their land base” (*After* 6).

28 The 1827 Constitution refers to previous treaties with the US defining the boundaries of the Nation in the east, including cessions by western emigrants concluded in 1817 and 1819. As a post-Removal document, the 1839 Constitution refers to the Treaty of 1833 with the Western Cherokees, which clearly defines the land holdings of the Nation in northeast Indian Territory, the Cherokee Strip, the Cherokee Outlet, and “neutral lands” in

Kansas in exchange for Cherokee lands in Arkansas. (The strip and neutral lands were subsequently ceded in the Treaty of 1866 and the boundaries of the Nation outlined in the 1839 Constitution were amended accordingly.) Interestingly, the 1839 Constitution omits the language of sovereignty and jurisdiction, perhaps because intrusion by whites was at this time less intensive that it was in Georgia or than it would become in subsequent decades.

29 This section of the Constitution of 1839 is virtually identical to the 1827 document.

30 For an in-depth study of how Cherokees mobilized such arguments and strategies throughout the nineteenth century, see Denson 28-51.

31 *LCN* (1868),148-49.

32 *LCN* (1881), Chapter XII, Article XIV, 272-74.

33 *LCN* (1892), Chapter XII, Article XV, 326-29.

34 While permit workers employed legally in the Nation in no way enjoyed political rights as citizens, they were afforded civil protections under the Cherokee constitution as evidenced by numerous court cases in which permit employees stood as both defendants and plaintiffs.

35 Though adopted citizens by marriage were accorded political and civil rights, they never received per capita payments from land sales and were denied claims to the national lands during allotment. As an adopted citizen by marriage, Oskison's own father fell into this category, though his two sons by Rachel Buzzard enjoyed such privileges. During allotment, this issue became intensely contentious and the Cherokee courts ultimately ruled that intermarried whites, Cherokee freedmen, and adopted Delawares and Shawnees were ineligible for per capita payments and allotments (*LCN:* 1892, 370-373). For the implications of Cherokee constitutionalism for slaves and free blacks in the Nation from the national period through statehood, see Perdue *Slavery* 50-118*;* Sturm 52-81; Miles 100-203; and Naylor 25-50, 155-78.

36 Located in Ft. Smith, Arkansas, Parker's court was established by an act of Congress in 1871 and held absolute jurisdiction over all crimes in Indian Territory except those between citizens of Indian nations. Subsequent acts passed in 1885, 1887 and 1888 all but eviscerated the rights and capacities of Indian nations to arrest, prosecute, and punish their own for crimes committed between Indians. As Wardell notes, such acts were geared as much at creating offices to meet the needs of political nepotism and protecting business interests as they were at dissolving tribal governments and dealing finally with

the “Indian problem.” Though referred to as the “hanging judge” for his execution of eighty-eight men during his twenty-five year tenure, Parker often spoke on behalf of Indian nations in the Territory and solicited their input before rendering decisions regarding the trust relationship with the US. See Wardell 308-09.

37 Articles II and II of the Treaty of Devil's Corner between Cherokees and Georgia and South Carolina concluded in May of 1777, for instance, establish the boundaries between Cherokee and state lands and prohibit incursions by one party into the territories of another. Treaties between Cherokee communities bordering North Carolina and Virginia similarly draw definitive boundary lines and provide for the removal and punishment of US squatters on Cherokee lands, stipulating that “no white man on any pretence whatsoever, shall build, plant, improve, settle, hunt, or drive stock below said Boundary line on pain of being drove off by the Indians, and further punished according to Law.” See Vine Deloria, Jr. and Raymond J. DeMallie, *Documents of American Indian Diplomacy: Treaties, Agreements, and Conventions, 1775-1979*, 70-73.

38 Consistent with its articulation throughout the Cherokee legal code, the use of “white” in this discussion should be read as a signifier of both race and national affiliation. Early provisions codifying intermarriage between “white men and Cherokee women” and “white women and Cherokee men” (*LCN* 1852: 10, 57) are later amended explicitly to address intermarriage with non-white, non-citizen “Foreigners” as well as non-citizen Indians (*LCN* 1892: 329, 334). It should also be noted that four resolutions passed between 1820 and 1824 legally excluded black slaves and free blacks from citizenship and legal protections, defining free blacks as intruders, condemning intermarriage between slaves and Cherokees or whites, and forbidding blacks from owning or inheriting property (*LCN* 1852: 24-25, 37-39). Such provisions, incorporated into the constitutions of 1827 and 1839 (Art III, Sec. 5) and strengthened in subsequent acts relating to citizenship, intermarriage, and education, were excised in Article 9 of the Treaty of 1866 (Naylor 225), the provisions of which were incorporated as amendments to the constitution later that year (*LCN* 1892: 33-34, 35).

39 *LCN* (1852), 10-11.

40 Ibid. 57. For the socio-political impacts of nationhood and the constitution on Cherokee women, see McLoughlin, *Renascence* 326-49; Perdue, *Slavery* 50-52; and Perdue, *Cherokee* 115-158. While my present focus doesn't adequately attend to race and gender analyses of the text, it is ripe for such work especially within a constitutional critical frame. Just as blacks and women were marginalized politically in Cherokee constitutional law, so are they treated in similar terms in Oskison's texts.

41 *LCN* (1881), 276-77. Among other provisions, in its assignation of federal rights of

removal for US intruders from Indian Country, the Trade and Intercourse Act of 1834 represented a significant incursion into Indian political autonomy. For the full text of the act, see http://rs6.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage collId=llsl&fileName=004/llsl004 .db&recNum =777.

42 A resolution from Sept. 24, 1839 for instance, restricts the erection of improvements by a citizen within a half mile of another citizen's improvements subject to their consent. *LCN* (1852), 29.

43 Indeed, Andrew Denson identifies the ironic redirection of dominant Anglo discourses as a central Cherokee rhetorical strategy throughout the nineteenth century (28-51).

44 Such generic manipulations through the use of humor, irony, and absurdity aligns with the kind of postinidan survivance in Vizenor's work as well as a tradition of diffusing tension embedded in deliberative critique discussed in Brooks.

45 Cox writes that this absencing convention "is the storytelling equivalent of conquest … a basic colonial desire for a landscape emptied of its Indigenous population … either there has been a conquest, there will be conquest, or the conquest is always-already completed because it has been foreordained by the Christian God" (13).

46 My conflation of an individual citizen-protagonist with the Nation as a whole should be read within the generic conventions of the romance where the hero generally stands in as allegorical figure for the national community and its people. In reality, of course, no such absolute correspondence exists. Indeed, part of the work of national narratives is to institutionalize such narrative relationships by erasing the differences and complexities which frustrate at every turn efforts to collapse the moral hero and the national community.

47 Though not explicitly named, Oskison undoubtedly drew upon his knowledge of the Keetoowah Society led by figures such as Redbird Smith, Smith Christie, and others in his descriptions of this group.

48 In an unpublished essay examining the parallels between Indian Territory and Indigenous Mexico in the work of Oskison and Will Rogers, James Cox notes that reading *Wild Harvest* and *Black Jack Davy* as "companion novels" complicates any easy reading of Oskison as either assimilationist or resistant. Rather, "As these two novels demonstrate, the context defines whether the appropriate strategy is retreat or direct confrontation" (np). My attention to the Cherokee geographies in Oskison's texts is greatly indebted to our conversations about these and other texts of the period.

49 For more on compromise and accommodation as legitimate political strategies and models for intertribal/international diplomacy, see my final chapter, “Ruth Muskrat Bronson and the 'Politics of Accommodation.'”

50 For various models of belonging in Indian Country, see Brooks, Lyons *X-Marks* 170-89, Justice “Go Away” 150-55, Holm et al “Peoplehood,” and Alfred *Peace* 85-88.

51 Justice makes a similar argument in a reading of Oskison's *Singing Bird*: “His Indian Territory isn't just about Indians–by the time of his birth, the growing White population was already alarming Indian leaders, and that growing population threat brought with it many challenges for the People. Yet it's still *Indian* Territory; it's still the land under the political jurisdiction and authority of the Real People; and it's still the place where they exercise their rights of self-determination and sovereignty, where they fight to determine their own way in the world without interference from the United States and its citizens” (118). I am pushing Justice's nation-centered analysis further by attending to constitutional elements present in the text.

52 Larson early identified Oskison's ironic use of the signifier “Dawes” described here (49). However, the generational typology into which he positions Oskison as an abject “assimilationist” prevents him from reading it as anything more than narrative play, rather than exploring the potentially radical narrative and political implications of this choice.

53 Drawing on theorists of nation, nationalism, and national belonging ranging from Ernest Gellner, Eric Hobsbawm, and Anthony D. Smith to Taiaike Alfred, Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, Tom Holm and others, Anishinaabe critic Scott Lyons locates the nation as a distinctly modern form of political identification centered less on ties to an ethnic community than a political commitment to the sovereignty and autonomy of the Cherokee nation-state. Though Cherokee citizenship moved in this direction throughout the nineteenth century, evidenced in numerous resolutions to extend citizenship to non-Cherokees *outside of the convention of marriage*, kinship and familial descent still remained deeply embedded as a major bedrock of Cherokee political belonging. An argument might forcefully be made that contemporary citizenship requirements based upon lineal descent from early twentieth century government rolls retains at least the traces of that commitment to kinship, though tying political legitimacy to a single document affords much less flexibility than more “modern” naturalization procedures, contemporary theories of peoplehood, or earlier clan systems did. For a concise and provocative discussion of nationhood and citizenship as it pertains to Indian Country, see chapters 3 and 4 in Lyons *X-Marks*.

54 Conceived as a process of narrative signification, “the representation of social *life* rather than the discipline of social *polity*,” Bhabha has argued that such ambiguity and ambivalence are definitive of all narratives of the nation-space (“Introduction” 2). Indeed, it is precisely in the refusal of the margins to be easily incorporated (or appropriated) into totalizing national narratives that the nation as an image and idea is revealed as an ongoing process of narrative, “where meanings may be partial because they are *in medias res*; and history may be half-made because it is in the process of being made; and the image of cultural authority may be ambivalent because it is caught, uncertainly, in the act of composing its powerful image … The Other is never outside or beyond us; it emerges forcefully within cultural discourse, when we *think* we speak most intimately and indigenously 'between ourselves'” (“Introduction” 3,4).

55 http://www.cherokee.org/Docs/TribalGovernment/Executive/CCC/2003_CN_CONSTITUTION.pdf

Chapter Two: Negotiating the Archive, Contesting Civilization: Rachel Caroline Eaton's *John Ross and the Cherokee Indians*

> Each generation has created and re-created the Cherokee in the image of that age … this mythical Cherokee looms so large today that the real one is in danger of being forgotten by many Indians and much of white society that has come to believe many of these often-contradictory myths.
> —Rennard Strickland, "Introduction" to *A Political History of the Cherokee Nation*

> In the written records of America the place accorded the aboriginal peoples who once ruled over the whole western world can scarcely be considered a reputable one … That he has ever cherished any but sinister sentiments for those who dispossessed him of his birthright or that he has exercised any but destructive influences upon the history of the country has been too often ignored. It is even denied that he is capable of Anglo-Saxon civilization.
> —Rachel Caroline Eaton, *John Ross and the Cherokee Indians*

Born from an anxiety not dissimilar to that expressed by Eaton almost a century ago, the Cherokee Nation formed the Sequoyah Historical Commission in 2007 to ensure that the Indian history of the state of Oklahoma would not be minimized in official preparations for the centennial later that year. Its original mandate was to bring prominent Indigenous scholars and local authorities together to discuss that history and its relationship to contemporary issues facing Native peoples across the state. Over the next few years, the commission broadened its focus, bringing scholars working in a variety of disciplines together with an array of artists, activists, elders, oral historians, technologists, entrepreneurs and Indian government employees from tribal nations across the country. Though the focus of the conference remains historical and local, its expanded mandate

captures the range of work taking place across Indian Country and reaffirms the vital relationships between tribal communities, Indian governments, and community-centered, politically-committed, intellectual work. One panel at the 2010 conference underscored the decolonizing potential of such work and illustrated the challenges that remain to contest the massive archive of misrepresentation and misunderstanding to which Strickland and Eaton refer.

The panel assembled Cherokee and other Indian contributors to the "Trail of Tears" installment of PBS's *We Shall Remain* series, a five-part historical docudrama depicting significant—and, for popular audiences, familiar—events in Native and US history from Indian cultural and political perspectives.[1] The panel—consisting of director Chris Eyre (Cheyenne and Arapaho), principal actor Wes Studi (Cherokee Nation), scholar and commentator Jace Weaver (Cherokee descent), and Cherokee genealogist and tribal councilman Jack Baker (Cherokee Nation)—spoke about what they hoped to accomplish producing an Indian-centered version of the well-worn narrative of removal. In addition to representing Cherokees as central historical agents rather than tragic victims of federal policy and white racism, they also hoped to resist reductive narratives positioning patriotic, anti-removal nationalist heroes against duplicitous, pro-removal traitorous villains. While acknowledging the horrific consequences visited upon Cherokee families as a consequence of removal, the panelists also wished to honor the profound triumph of survival and reconstruction in Indian Territory. While undeniably *tragic*, the story of the removal, as the filmmakers saw it, was not itself a *tragedy*. Rather,

they wanted to situate the narrative within larger US-national discussions about power and political legitimacy and to locate the removal as one significant moment in a much longer and continuing history of Cherokee nation-peoplehood. Put simply, they sought to explore both the tragedy and triumph of the events depicted, express the humanity of the principal actors involved, and honor those who continue to refuse the annihilation imperative of Manifest Destiny.

Audience reaction to the film was lukewarm. While most appreciated and sympathized with the filmmakers' intentions, some criticized what they viewed as an overly-sympathetic depiction of the Ridge/Treaty Party faction, while others cited the film's failure to critically evaluate the role that self-interest and self-preservation played in the Ross/National party's obstinacy against removal and the traumatic consequences of those decisions. Breaking along political lines shot through with decades-old familial, cultural, racial and economic tensions, the discussion quickly deteriorated into emotionally-charged arguments between Ross, Ridge, and Old Settler descendants, each indicting the other for the trauma suffered and lives lost on the Trail of Tears and the civil chaos of the ensuing decades. Though removed from the actual events by almost one hundred and seventy years, emotions were still too raw, memories still too vivid, families still too invested in their own *familiar* narratives of events.[2] Thus it is that the removal remains, through oral tradition, family stories, and a vast written archive of Cherokee and non-Cherokee authored accounts, a powerful memory-experience for many Cherokee families and a central narrative component of Cherokee national identity in the west.[3]

The filmmakers' intentions to produce an Indian-centered, humanist counterhistory of the removal and the Cherokee audience's resistance to those efforts highlight the complications and contradictions embedded in most attempts to negotiate, contest and revise historical archives on Native peoples. The need to produce counterhistories authored by Indians emerging from Indian communities themselves is by now a well-understood axiom across Indian Country. In fact, contestation and revision constitute two fundamental projects in which Native writers have historically engaged and which remain crucial components in Native struggles for self-determination. This fact was lost on neither the filmmakers nor the audience, none of whom would argue that Cherokees and other Indian peoples have been terribly misrepresented through(out) history and that such misrepresentations, translated into popular sentiment, public policy and legal precedent, have worked largely to the detriment of Native nations. Because locally-produced history within Native communities is deeply embedded in family histories, personal experience, community memory and tribal identity, efforts to challenge or revise familiar narratives run up against a wall of political antagonisms and deeply held emotional investments.[4]

Published in 1921, Rachel Caroline Eaton's *John Ross and the Cherokee Indians* struggles with many of these same issues. Written in a historical moment still dominated by ethnocentric narratives of Anglo-triumphalism and social-evolutionist paradigms of human history, the text attempts a “sympathetic interpretation” of Cherokee national history as told through the life of its most recognizable leader. In many ways, it succeeds

brilliantly. Refusing narratives that villify Indian peoples as irredeemable savages, romanticize them as noble yet tragically-doomed primitives, or cast them as auxiliary curiosities within the larger progressivist story of US expansion, Eaton's text recovers Ross and other Cherokee figures as historical agents in a narrative of *Indian* national emergence in the Americas. The text's subversive potential is tempered, however, by its reliance upon the discursive edifice of civilization. Eaton frames her "sympathetic" treatment of Cherokee history as a narrative "from barbarism to civilization of one of the most progressive tribes of North American Indians" (Preface np). Though staking claims to both nationhood and modernity, Eaton's understanding of Cherokee national emergence as a decidedly modern project driven primarily by acculturated Cherokee families, and its relegation of resistant, conservative factions to the narrative margins, reads in many ways as biased and restrictive as the dominant US narratives against which she wrote. Nonetheless, Eaton clearly conceived the work as a counterhistory to dominant discourses about Indian people.

Drawing upon contemporary historiographic methods from the New Indian History and Indigenous critical theory, in this chapter I examine Eaton's negotiation with the discourse of civilization and consider both the subversive potential and critical limitations of the interventions into Cherokee historiography and Indian biography that she attempted. In order to appreciate the text's counterhistorical intentions, I first survey three of her primary sources, analyzing the strategies by which they appropriate Cherokee people into larger historiographic frames of colonialism, civilization and progress. I then

historicize Eaton's negotiation with civilization within a Cherokee rhetorical tradition that appropriates the ambiguity embedded in the discourse in order to contest exclusivist assumptions of Anglo racial superiority and US political legitimacy. Having established Eaton's place in this tradition, I analyze the political implications of the revisionist interventions she attempted and consider the critical limitations imposed by her reliance on the discursive restrictions of "civilization."

Reading Eaton's Archive: Civilization, Nationhood and Federal Indian Policy

As Phil Deloria notes, advancing counterhistories requires that Native peoples become intimately versed in the extensive non-Indian authored archive on Indigenous peoples. This process requires Native historians to identify epistemological bias and ethnocentric prejudice and to correct inaccuracies and misrepresentation. They must also listen to the silences and attend to the gaps that inform and in many ways structure how colonialist narratives elide Indigenous views of history through strategies of erasure, (mis)representation and negation.[5] The stakes of such negotiations are nothing less than decolonization itself. As Linda Tuhiwai Smith writes:

> *Coming to know the past* has been part of the critical pedagogy of decolonization. To hold alternative histories is to hold alternative knowledges. The pedagogical implication of this access to alternative knowledges is that they can form the basis of alternative ways of doing things. Transforming our colonized views of our own history (as written

> by the West), however, requires us to revisit, site by site, our history under Western eyes. (34)

To negotiate the historical archive as an Indigenous person, then, is to engage in a dual process of re*writing* history in order to re*right* the place of Indigenous people in it and, in doing so, to produce alternatives to the binary paradigms of self/other, civilized/savage, settlement/wilderness, and civilization/frontier that structure many colonial and settler-state histories (Smith 28).[6] These challenges and revisions provide more "complex" or "comprehensive" accounts of the historical dynamics of contact, conflict, collision, adaptation and exchange.[7] They also carve out space for Indigenous claims to humanity, nationhood, sovereignty and universal rights within discourses that have historically reserved such privileges as the special purview of European settler-states.[8] In order to evaluate both the extent and efficacy of Indigenous historiographic interventions, then, it is necessary to survey not only the sources themselves, but also the historical traditions and intellectual currents in and against which Indigenous historians write.

Eaton situates her political bildungsroman of Ross and the Cherokee Nation against sources ranging from colonial travel narratives and early ethnographies to state and regional histories and Bureau of Ethnology reports.[9] Three important sources to which she repeatedly returns are Adair's *History of the American Indians* (1775), Bartram's *Travels Through North and South Carolina, Georgia, East and West Florida...* (1791), and Royce's *Cherokee Nation of Indians* (1884). While the latter text is identifiably a history—it is extensively sourced and cited—Adair's and Bartram's texts

are more ethnographic. Though constrained by the ethnocentric discourse of savagery and civilization, the three accounts are, nonetheless, relatively sympathetic to Cherokee and Indian peoples. Where Adair's narrative argues for the essential "humanity" of Native peoples within a theory of Hebrew descent, Bartram's travel narrative contrasts the "simplicity" and natural reason of Native life with the morally-bankrupt and vice-ridden condition of "civilized" British and Spanish colonies. Written at the end of the nineteenth century amid enormous pressure to dissolve tribal governments and liquidate tribal estates, Royce's text positions Cherokees as exemplars of the civilization program who have both a legal and moral claim to national identity. If one of Eaton's primary tasks as a Cherokee historian was to challenge anti-Indian bias within historical discourse itself, then her reliance on these more "sympathetic" sources might be seen as a disciplinary strategy to stack the deck.

Published in 1755, Adair's *History of the American Indians* is a collection of observations based upon the author's over forty year career as a deerskin trader in the Southeast, during which time he also lived among and married into both Chickasaw and Cherokee families. As an early ethnography, the text claims to present a comprehensive account of the origins, language, social structures, cultural practices and other items of ethnologic interest of the Catawbas, Cherokees, Choctaws, Chickasaws, and Seminoles. As Kathryn Braund notes, Adair originally intended the text as a defense of his moral character and an attempt to restore his political and economic ambitions against assaults by South Carolina officials and colonial financiers with whom he had fallen out.[10] Adair

juxtaposes his experience as trader, diplomatic negotiator and military figure capable of bringing about and maintaining peace on the colonial frontier against the ineptitude and military incompetence of South Carolina officials. As with John Smith's later revisioning of his interactions with the Tsenacommacah alliance in his *True History of Virginia* or in the numerous Puritan accounts of their war against the Pequots, Cherokees and other Indian peoples function for Adair as narrative mechanisms through which to (re)establish his authority, potentially recuperate his political and economic ambitions, and recover his historical legacy for posterity.

While self-interest was one motivation for writing *History*, Adair was also genuinely concerned about the future of Indigenous peoples embroiled in imperial wars. Influenced by his personal and political relations with Southeastern peoples, Adair forwards an argument of common humanity on their behalf framed within a highly controversial theory of Hebraic descent. Believing that American Indians were descendants of the Lost Tribes of Israel, Adair adopts a comparative framework of interpreting cultural difference that would come to dominate ethnology and anthropology throughout the next century. In twenty-three theses that comprise just over two thirds of the text, everything from Indigenous clan and social structures, gender relationships and sexual practices, and ceremonial practices and spiritual beliefs are read through a prism of Hebrew cultural practice. Those things that struck Adair as familiar according to Biblical accounts—female menstrual segregation, monagamy, and the "baptismal" practice of going to water, for instance—are unproblematically cited as evidence of his

theory. Other identifiably “barbarous” and non-Christian social elements such as clan law, the torture and execution of prisoners, the scalping of military opponents and the sexual liberty of Indian women are explained away as functions of material and environmental conditions that encourage cultural regression as a means of survival.[11]

Though scholars have recognized that Adair's raw observations are more or less accurate, his widely erroneous representations of Indigenous cultural practices ultimately serve colonialist purposes. His appropriation of Cherokee lifeways into a Hebrew binary framework of purity and pollution radically misunderstands Cherokee ceremonial life, gender relationships and sexual practices. Further, his focus on only those elements that fit into his comparative framework results in complete elisions or reductive sketches of the social, political, and economic significance of matrilineality in Indian communities, the complexities of Cherokee rituals, and the intricate structures of Indigenous governance and leadership. By misrepresenting Cherokee cultural practices to general audiences in England and the colonies, Adair's *History* encourages a view of Indigenous peoples as exotic Others, positioning them as the historical, cultural, and political antithesis of the enlightened, modern, technologically-adept, fully-actualized Christian colonial citizen-subject.[12]

Besides exoticizing Indigenous social and cultural practices, the text more explicitly serves colonialist purposes by advocating the colonization of Cherokee homelands both as an imperial economic project and an act of benevolence to Indian people. Indeed, one of the text's explicit intentions is to outline “[t]he Benefits of

colonizing GEORGIANA and civilizing the INDIANS—And the way to make all the Colonies more valuable to the Mother Country" (title page). In addition to social structures and cultural practices, Adair documents Indigenous diplomatic conventions, war tactics and strategies, material capabilities, and production capacities, including a detailed map that delineates tribal territorial boundaries, common trade and travel routes, and the location of individual town sites. In representing what were still for most colonists utterly foreign peoples and lands, *History* effects a kind of colonialist mapping of Indigenous social and political spaces, providing its readers not simply with items of ethnologic curiosity but also strategic information useful in times of conflict. Adair's *History* thus participates in larger imperial projects to domesticate Native places within European spatial paradigms and legal discourses as a means of "marking, defining and controlling space" (L. Smith 53).[13] Though Adair's text clearly gives the lie to the myth of an empty wilderness, and his critiques of colonial duplicity, ineptitude and frontier bloodlust fracture the moral edifice of European superiority, it does so within an imperialist frame which sets Indigenous peoples and places on the periphery of European colonial space from which conquest, settlement, and civilization—and thus history—proceed from east to west.

Published almost forty years later, Bartram's *Travels Through North and South Carolina, Georgia, East and West Florida* (1791) similarly operates within Eurocentric discursive constructs as a means to advance a common humanity argument and to advocate for more humane treatment of Indian peoples.[14] At once a travel narrative and an

extensively detailed naturalist account of the southeast, Bartram's text romanticizes Native peoples as the classically primitive antithesis to the vice-ridden and morally-bankrupt colonial population. Though "not for levelling [sic] things down to the simplicity of Indians," Bartram believes EuroAmericans might "possibly better our condition in civil society, by paying some more respect to and impartially examining the system of legislation, religion, morality, and economy of these despised, persecuted *wild people*" (550). Thus, while "civilization" remains the stick by which Bartram measures Native societies, he does not presume that any one religious, political or cultural community possesses an exclusive claim to it. Consequently, his "defense" of Native peoples reads much like a point-by-point refutation of rhetorics of savagery firmly located within the "noble savage" tradition of Rosseau, Montaigne and Chateaubriand.

Rejecting popularly-held notions that Native peoples possess no civil forms of government, Bartram celebrates the non-coercive and egalitarian nature of consensus governance and voluntary civic engagement rooted in "natural reason" as superior to "the most complicated system of modern politics, or sumptuary laws, enforced by coercive means" by despotic magistrates whose claims to power are "generally effected by schism and the influence of friends gained by craft, bribery, and often by more violent efforts" (394-395). In contrast to European duplicity and rampant self-interest, Bartram describes the "national character" of Creek and Cherokee peoples as dignified, steadfast, honor-bound, fiercely independent and "tenacious of the liberties and natural rights of man" at the expense of virtually all else. Speaking of the lengths to which Muskogees go to

defend their territories and way of life, Bartram cites their unparalleled valor and skill in battle as well as the magnanimity, generosity, and sympathy they show toward those they have vanquished. For Bartram, this was no better evident than in the Creek propensity to confederate equally with other tribal people who, upon joining the league, "immediately enjoy, unexceptionably, every right of free citizens" (389).

In addition to self-governance and "national character," Bartram looks equally to Native concepts of property, labor and agricultural practices, manufacturing and the arts as important signifiers of Native civilization. Arguing against "vague and general" misconceptions that Native peoples have no notion of private property, Bartram observes commonly-held spatial arrangements complimented by respect for privacy and individual improvements. In contrast to derogatory images of Native peoples as primitive hunters and gatherers, Bartram observes extensive agricultural practices with both large, community-shared "plantations" and privately-held gardens under constant cultivation. Compared with the individualist ethic he laments in EuroAmerican settlements, Bartram cites Native charity and community granaries as admirable social innovations against drought, hunger, and social instability. His observation of respectful, egalitarian gender relations and discreet monogamous marriages similarly undermine stereotypes of Indian sexual lasciviousness and female drudgery.[15] Though Bartram recognizes nothing particularly noteworthy about Native art and material production, he finds Native peoples unparalleled in "moral character," hospitality, social graces, economic sense and political comportment. When compared with many of the less scrupulous frontier whites, Bartram

concludes that southeastern Native peoples "certainly stand in no need of European civilization" and that what "gains" they may have made "towards the true refinements of civilization … cannot, in the least degree, be attributed to the good examples" of their white neighbors, an argument Franklin often levied decades later (391).[16]

Prefiguring the cultural relativism of the Boasian revolution over a century later, Bartram's understanding of "civilization" is both relative and self-reflexive; he understands it as an ideal of living to which peoples might aspire but to which no community had an exclusive claim, as well as a discourse too easily deployed in order to justify violence against and dispossession of Native peoples. Where Adair navigates the totalizing discourse of civilization by attempting to explain cultural difference through a comparative rhetoric of the same—i.e. Indians are humans because they are "one of us"—Bartram undermines the exclusivist, universalist presuppositions upon which the discourse itself rested. To be sure, both Adair and Bartram were convinced that the "true refinements" of civilization—understood as a matrix of Eurocentric standards of living, concepts of private property ownership and governance, nuclear family structures, gendered divisions of labor and wealth, manners, and standards of appearance and dress, education, literacy, law, and Christianity—were far and away superior to the exigencies of "savage" or "primitive" life. However they each held a healthy suspicion of exclusivist claims to civilization, particularly as they were used to exclude Native peoples from the common decency accorded "civilized," "Christian" peoples. Restricted by the discursive limitations through which they framed their arguments, however, both stopped short of

declaring Native and European peoples as *equals* much less advancing arguments for the inherent rights of Native communities to sovereignty, self-governance or contemporary nationhood. In order to advance humanistic arguments on behalf of Native communities, each felt compelled to incorporate them into existing epistemological and discursive frames in which such claims could legitimately be made.

By the late nineteenth century, critical attitudes toward civilization evident in the eighteenth century had crystallized into a zealous confidence in its absolute superiority and historical inevitability. Instituted as official policy by the Washington administration following the Revolutionary War, the civilization policy was systematized under Jefferson as a means to effect cultural denationalization and rapid cessions of land from Indigenous peoples under the guise of treaty law and the philosophy of benevolent conquest. As Jefferson envisioned it, federally appointed agents would distribute farming implements, agricultural materials, cooking utensils, clothing, food staples and other material necessities on revolving credit to Indian peoples. At the same time, missionaries would establish churches and schools in the region to promote Christianity and acculturation to white social, political, and economic practices.[17] Jefferson devised a monopoly system of debt peonage to US agencies, the payment of which would come exclusively in Indian lands, as a guarantee against the prospect of Indians becoming *too* adept at agrarian lifeways and hanging stubbornly onto their homelands and national identities. The Louisiana Purchase in 1803 provided a fail-safe mechanism for removal across the trans-Mississippi west should such efforts fail.[18] With the passage of the Indian

Removal Act thirty years later and the Jackson administration's refusal to enforce the Supreme Court's recognition of Cherokee sovereignty in *Worcester v. Georgia*, US lawmakers ruled on the fundamental irreconcilability between "savage" Native people and "civilized" white Americans. In doing so, they closed the door on the possibility of Native and American political spaces existing side by side.

Over the next forty years, while Native peoples from the southeast rebuilt their nations in the Indian Territory, rapid US expansion into the great plains, Texas, Oregon, and the former Mexican territories in the Southwest increasingly brought Indian and non-Indian peoples into contact and conflict over land. Following the Civil War, the full weight of the US military was placed in service of expansion, but public outcry against massacres of Indian communities at Sand Creek, a rash of Indian-white conflict across the Plains and into Texas, and reports chronicling an epidemic of corruption, avarice and governmental ineptitude forced yet another policy shift. Known as the "Peace Policy," the Grant administration sought to confine Native peoples on reservation trust land administered by civilian church denominations. Hoping to minimize white depredations and military conflict, the reservations were conceived as protected holding grounds where Native peoples might be acculturated to white ways in preparation for their eventual incorporation as US citizens.[19] While the treaties of Medicine Lodge Creek (1867) and Fort Laramie (1868) signaled for many the "success" of this shift, fundamental misunderstandings between federal and Indian negotiators concerning the goals of the agreements persisted. As conflicts reemerged in the north, and as the traumatic impact of

the forced removals of Poncas, Cheyennes and Nez Perces to Indian Territory became matters of public concern, Christian reformist groups intensified their commitments to the civilization program, launched vociferous assaults on the Indian Service and the reservation system, and pushed increasingly for rapid assimilation reform.[20]

Conflating Anglo-Saxon Protestantism, American nationalism, and social evolutionary theory with ideologies of Manifest Destiny and the white man's burden, a consortium of Christian reformers, professional anthropologists, self-interested capitalists and land-hungry boomers came to see the Americanization of the continent's first peoples as a historical and moral imperative.[21] Two years after Helen Hunt Jackson released her indictment of federal Indian policy and the reservation system, *A Century of Dishonor* (1881)—which like Adair and Bartram argued for more humane treatment of Native peoples while stopping short of critiquing the colonizing process itself—Congress established the Bureau of Ethnology within the Smithsonian Institute. Expanding upon the social theory of Lewis Henry Morgan, Bureau leaders John Wesley Powell and Alice Cunningham Fletcher provided a professionalized, scientific authority to federal policies advocating detribalization, allotment and assimilation.[22] Concurrently, Richard Henry Pratt, Thomas Jefferson Morgan, Fletcher and other "friends of the Indian" began instituting an extensive system of forced education explicitly designed to undermine tribal relations and eradicate tribal cultures.[23] On the political front, allotment advocates mobilized public sentiment to pass the Indian Allotment Act of 1887 which liquidated the tribal estate and dissolved tribal governments in hopes of producing fully-individualized,

private-property owning Indian *American* citizen-subjects.[24] Viewing Indian nationhood as a historical anachronism or contradiction in terms, these "reformers" hoped to impose civilization on Native peoples not as a means of honoring the political autonomy, treaty rights, and legal protections of Indian nations but to eradicate everything Indian in order that the man—rather than the people—might live.[25]

Written just as movements for allotment, assimilation, tribal dissolution and the territorialization of Indian Territory were gaining momentum, Charles Royce's *The Cherokee Nation of Indians* (1883) documents in painstaking detail the long and complicated legal history of Cherokee-US relations. An employee of the newly-minted Bureau of Ethnology, Royce was originally assigned by director John Wesley Powell in 1879 to document the history of Indian land cessions for Congress. A staunch disciple of former director and father of American anthropology Lewis Henry Morgan, Powell subscribed wholeheartedly to Morgan's environmentalist theory of universal human progress proceeding from savagery and barbarism into civilization, with private property and agricultural-industrial modes of production as defining characteristics. Also like Morgan, Powell viewed civilization as a juggernaut, proceeding inexorably to its predetermined end, absorbing—or destroying—everything in its path.[26] As Hoxie observes, these attitudes resulted in a conflicted ambivalence between sympathy and resignation toward American Indians. Where professional ethnologists sought to salvage Indian cultural forms before they vanished entirely, reformers hoped to avoid their complete destruction by "raising" Indians to a higher level of progress while attempting

to minimize the trauma this rapid “advancement” might induce. At the same time, the presumption of inevitability embedded in Morgan's theories provided all involved “comfort in the idea that cruel policies such as removal or punitive warfare,” and later forced assimilation and allotment, were regrettable but “unavoidable steps along the road to progress” (Hoxie, *Final* 18). Powell's innovation to Morgan's theory was to remove this ambiguity by focusing on the positive implications of progress and adding a final category of development to Morgan's model: enlightenment. Equating political and economic complexity and technological advancement with enlightened progress, Powell was certain that human civilization was heading inevitably toward a period of universal enlightenment in which racial, national, and economic antagonisms would give way in modernity to international peace and universal benevolence.[27] Presumed relics of a vanishing period of human history, Indians were ideal subjects of ethnographic study and progressivist policies of social engineering.

Powell's directive that Royce's project illuminate “the effect of the presence of civilization upon savagery” reveals the unidirectional bias and cultural chauvinism embedded in his theory of human progress (qtd in Hoxie 24). The purpose of Royce's assignment, then, was not to document the Cherokees' historical and legal claims to nationhood at a time when those claims were most under duress. Rather, it was to document how the Cherokees' contact with civilization positively influenced their development out of Indian savagery and into civilized, Anglo-Saxon enlightenment. In its extensive documentation of the legal history between the Cherokee Nation and the US

government, as well as its strong criticism of US graft, duplicity and self-interested aggression, Royce's text undermines Powell's theoretical optimism even as its legal-historiographic frame reinforces a narrative of domestication of both Native lands and peoples under US legal and political jurisdiction. Like Adair, Bartram, Jefferson and his reformist contemporaries, Royce presumes EuroAmerican civilization as both the apex of human social development and the historical telos at which every community must necessarily arrive in order to survive as a people. He thus enthusiastically endorses "civilization" programs as "human policy" intended to prepare Indian peoples for the inevitable incursions of white settlements and to indoctrinate them in the ideology of individual "self-support" through agriculture, education, Christian morality, formal governmental structures, and other signifiers of Anglo-Saxon "civilization" (202). That the Cherokees and other "civilized" nations in Indian Territory had made great strides toward such ends established their claims to both nationhood and modernity. In this, Royce moves beyond Adair and Bartram and in direct opposition to Powell and reformists like Jackson in advocating for the continued national status of the Cherokee Nation.

While the legal frame of *The Cherokee Nation* unquestionably establishes the legitimacy of Cherokee claims to nationality and sovereignty under international and US law, its implication within late-nineteenth century discourses of civilization and progress, as well as political philosophies of discovery and conquest, limit the text in important ways. Though characterizing white incursions into Cherokee lands as "ignorant,"

"unscrupulous" and "insatiable with the average border settler then as it is now," Royce nonetheless depicts the treaty apparatus as a passive institution of convenience and expediency for the United States rather than the generally-coercive interactions they actually were (174, 187). Additionally, while Royce freely indicts government officials for hypocrisy and graft, and chronicles numerous flaws in both the intent and execution of federal Indian policy, he never fundamentally questions the legal right of any branch of the government to assert its plenary power over an Indian nation. In a history in which Cherokee nationhood is tied inextricably to its treaty relationship with a settler-state invested with the authority to define and terminate that relationship, Indian nationhood becomes, as many nineteenth century politicians understood it, nothing more than a privileged indulgence to be granted or stricken at the pleasure of the state.

The "official" entry of Cherokee peoples into both history and modernity begins, then, not with their centuries-long occupation of their southeastern homelands, but with their incorporation into the legal discourse of European international law. In much the same way that Adair's and Bartram's texts domesticate Cherokee space by narratively and graphically mapping it within a colonialist frame of reference, Royce's legal mapping of Cherokee history similarly naturalizes *inter-national* conflicts over land and political authority within a *domestic* narrative of US territorial consolidation and political hegemony.[28]

Royce's commitment to the savage/civilized binary forces his narrative into a number of other contradictions. Having exposed the graft, willful abrogation of

international law, and complete breakdown of federal constitutional authority that led to the removal, Royce rationalizes the crisis not as the product of governmental failure but as an inevitable consequence of "the tide of civilization"(214). Similarly, after demonstrating the federal government's failure to disburse treaty annuities following removal and noting a severe, multi-year drought that struck Indian Territory shortly thereafter, Royce explains the social and economic crises of the 1840s and early 1850s not as the logical consequences of forced removal but as products of a vaguely defined "natural improvidence of a somewhat primitive people" (320). Royce likewise frames the factional political conflicts resulting from a decades-long removal crisis not as the traumatic effects of policies of ethnic cleansing but as an anachronistic holdover of Indian "blood" law and other "savage" practices of "revenge." While retribution and clan law likely played a role in the reprisal killings, what Royce perceives as "the hostile and vindictive attitude" against Old Settler and Treaty Party members was at least partially a consequence of their violation of Cherokee law forbidding the sale of national lands without the express consent of the National Council. His later characterization of the "murder" of members of the Treaty Party "in the most brutal and atrocious manner" similarly ignores the legality of their executions in accordance with Cherokee laws they themselves authored, a fact Royce acknowledges only a few pages earlier (293).

The contradictions and slippages evident in the legal history become glaringly present in the section entitled "General Remarks" that concludes the narrative. On one hand, Royce, like Bartram, celebrates the "simple" life of "primitive" man whose only

wants include meeting his subsistence needs and demonstrating his valor in warfare, with the rest of his time "spent in indolence and frivolous amusements" while the women assumed responsibility for "the menial labor" and other "drudgery" scorned by the men (372). He lauds their loyalty and diplomatic ethics, praises their athletic excellence and bravery in the face of war or capture, and wishes for his Anglo-kin their commitment to repay debts and honor agreements. On the other hand, Royce denounces the uncivilized brutality of Indian warfare and their "cruel," "terrible" and "vindictive" nature when wronged. Though acknowledging that the "continued spread and seemingly insatiate demand for more territory" by unscrupulous whites is the leading cause of enmity between the Cherokee Nation and the federal government, Royce nonetheless characterizes that history not as the product of willful human action but "a struggle against fate" (373-74).

And yet, in the end, Royce is ultimately unable to consign the survival of the Cherokee Nation entirely to fate. Reflecting, perhaps, Powell's optimistic faith in human perfectability and the powers of scientifically-informed social engineering, Royce lays the survival of the Cherokee Nation not on the scales of legal jurisprudence but on the moral conscience of the federal government: "If the Government of the United States," he writes, "shall in this last resort of the Cherokees prove faithful to its obligations and maintain their country inviolate from the intrusions of white trespassers, the future of the nation will surely prove the capability of the American Indian under favorable conditions to realize in a high degree the possibilities of Anglo-Saxon civilization" (378). Despite

the history of governmental failure to fulfill exactly these commitments that *The Cherokee Nation* documents, Royce nonetheless hopes against hope that the present generation of federal officials committed to assimilation and allotment will be able to succeed where their predecessors so abjectly failed.

To fit the legal history of Cherokee nationhood and the extensive material and political causes of political conflict into the larger historiographic frame of savagery and civilization requires Royce to ignore the narrative of industry, education, literacy, agriculture, and "civilization" he so exhaustively documents. His treatment of treaty law and US jurisprudence as disinterested processes capable of adjudicating political conflict equitably despite hugely inequitable power relationships also fails to implicate US law, rooted in the doctrines of discovery and conquest, as a self-interested tool of colonization deployed specifically to undermine Indigenous claims to territory and political autonomy under the guise of justice. That Royce holds out hope for a more equitable treatment of Indians either by the Congress or the Supreme Court suggests, if anything, the fundamental irreconcilability between the unassailable narrative of Cherokee legal sovereignty he documents and the vanishing imperative embedded in discourses of savagery and civilization to which he ultimately accedes.

Royce's fears of governmental failure would indeed prove fateful. Though the governments of the Five Tribes, allied with non-Indian ranchers and other supporters, successfully resisted efforts to dissolve their governments, allot their lands and incorporate their nations into the US territorial structure for over two decades, Congress

opened the "unassigned," western portion of Indian Territory for white settlement in 1889 and officially organized Oklahoma Territory the next year.[29] The Five Tribes were similarly brought under the jurisdiction of the General Allotment Act with the passage of the Curtis Act in 1898. In two final attempts to avoid territorialization, delegates from the Five Tribes assembled in Eufala in the Creek Nation in 1902 and drew up a petition of protest against union with the Oklahoma Territory. On November 7th, 1905 they gathered again in Muskogee to adopt a constitution and elect representatives for an Indian State of Sequoyah. Their petition for admittance into the union separate from the Oklahoma Territory fell on deaf ears, however. Supported by President Roosevelt, Congress passed an enabling act to join the two territories on June 16, 1906. A year later, a constitutional convention was held and on September 17, 1907, the Constitution of the State of Oklahoma was ratified by a majority of delegates present. A month later, Roosevelt declared Oklahoma the newest state in the Union; with that declaration, tribal governments were dissolved. About to embark on a career as an Indian historian, Rachel Caroline Eaton, a citizen of the Cherokee Nation, was thirty-eight years old.

"Civilization" Seen Through Cherokee Eyes

Writing from within the discursive and disciplinary restrictions of early twentieth century academic history, and without the benefit of decolonization theory, a reaffirmed notion of Native sovereignty, or the institutional apparatuses of Native Studies and New Indian History, Eaton's story of Cherokee national emergence and patriotism it told

within the increasingly racialized, decidedly US-nationalistic discourses of civilization and progress. Considering Eaton's position as a mixed-blood Cherokee citizen educated in Cherokee public schools and a graduate of the Cherokee Female Seminary, her engagement with this discourse is not that surprising. As a fundamental provision of treaty relationships with the federal government and a central component in the move toward Cherokee nationalization in the late 1810s, Cherokees had long adopted a qualified relationship with the federal government's civilization program and its narcissistic attempts to transform Indian “savages” into civilized reflections of itself. While these accommodations effected significant changes to Cherokee lifeways, and while important differences existed over the conditions, extent and rapidity by which acculturation should or should not proceed, most Cherokees viewed a *qualified* adoption of EuroAmerican norms as a guarantee against military conflict on one hand and preservation of national autonomy on the other. The question then as now focused not on the merits of civilization per se, but the extent to which certain elements might positively contribute to and advance Cherokee cultural and political goals.

Early efforts to abolish blood law and centralize political authority over Cherokee communities, for instance, reflected as much a pragmatic need to mitigate internal tensions and regulate external conflict with frontier communities as it did a rejection of Cherokee social and political conventions. While signaling a more “civilized” division of gendered labor, Cherokee women continued to farm and used money gained from spinning and weaving to forward their own material interests, while men stocked the

range with cattle, sheep, goats and pigs as an adaptation of conventional hunting practices. Christianity and western education were similarly adopted by many Cherokees not as strategies to eradicate traditional spiritual practices or alienate children from their families as civilization advocates intended, but to arm a generation of Cherokees with knowledge and skills necessary to defend the political and economic interests of the Nation in the post-Revolutionary period. While the adoption of constitutional government and a written code of law concentrated political and legal authority in the hands of a relative few, it also incorporated Cherokee understandings of kinship, common land tenure, matrilineal property and maternal rights, and religious practice that differed significantly from its US counterpart. As petitions from Cherokee women protesting land cessions, demands by clan relations to attain citizenship for Afro-descent kin and provisions for naturalization based upon local affirmations of character suggest, traditional forms of influence and authority persisted, if often behind closed doors.

In much the same way that many Cherokees adopted "civilized" practices to suit their own cultural and political goals, they also developed a distinctly Cherokee form of civilized rhetoric variously deployed as a defense against legal and territorial incursions, a rhetorical device through which to hold federal authorities accountable for moral failures and political abrogations, a shared discourse through which to influence and mobilize the moral and reformist sentiments of the dominant culture, and a logical argument to mount a final defense of Cherokee common land holdings and national identity against allotment and territorialization.[30] As Denson painstakingly demonstrates,

Cherokees were as a adept at massaging and adapting the discourse to suit their own immediate needs as those who marshaled it against them. On one hand, they consistently framed the "Indian question" not as an issue of assimilation or vanishing but "the defense of Indian nationhood" itself and the challenge of identifying "an alternative to wardship as the basis for Indian-American relations" (5). On the other hand, they appropriated the ambiguity of civilized discourse evident in Adair, Bartram and Royce in order to hold Americans accountable for the multiple ways they violently subverted in practice the political ideals and Christian values they so ardently professed in theory. Denson writes: "Cherokees continually called attention to the contradictory nature of American Indian policy. They picked apart American efforts to disavow racism and oppression and insisted that if the Cherokees were to be dispossessed of their government and property it would be a crime and not the working out of some universal principle" of evolutionary determinism (10). As Denson's work shows, nineteenth century Cherokee political leaders were less committed to civilization as an absolute ideal than as a strategic political and rhetorical tool through which to advance their demands to "be, still, a nation."[31]

Though Denson's study focuses explicitly on a tradition of Cherokee political discourse, such strategies are evident across a broad spectrum of Cherokee writing. In the early nineteenth century, Cherokee women combined matrilineal kinship relations with American notions of Christian virtue and republican womanhood to broker peace and demand an end to land cessions. John Ridge and Elias Boudinot similarly juxtaposed

Cherokee “advances” in civilization against the savage aggression and hypocrisy of Georgia militias and federal authorities in a series of impassioned pleas for US sympathy during the height of the Removal crisis. Reflecting his own bitterness and anger engendered by the traumatic consequences of the removal and its aftermath, John Rollin Ridge launched a scathing critique of US imperial violence against peoples of color in the novel *The Life and Adventures of Joaquin Murieta* (1854). Later in the century, Narcissa Owen and Lucy Lowrey Hoyt Keys drew upon Cherokee historical traditions, family narratives, personal experiences and collective memories to compose at once personal and collective national histories of Cherokee people. At about the same time, Oskison began subverting the narrative conventions of frontier and western romances in his early short stories and historical sketches. As Daniel Justice's study of Cherokee literature demonstrates, this rhetorical tradition continued well into the twentieth century, as Cherokees continued to negotiate the beloved path of mediation and accommodation and the resistant path of opposition and critique. Whether openly contesting misrepresentation and criticizing hypocrisy or mediating conflict and brokering alliance, these writers deployed civilized discourse to levy claims not only to humanity, history, and modernity but also to nationhood. As with her fellow countrymen and women, Eaton wrestles with the ambiguities of civilization in all its manifestations (savagery/civilization; wilderness/frontier/West; tribe/nation; primitive/modern) in an attempt to carve out a place for Indian people within it.

Critiquing Civilization, Engendering Compassion

Similar to nineteenth century efforts to resist allotment and territorialization, Eaton appropriates civilized discourse both to undermine its Anglo-centric underpinnings and to levy strong critiques against US hypocrisy, exploitation, violence and arbitrary abuses of power. Rejecting the ambivalent resignation that continued to define reformist efforts in Indian affairs, Eaton argues that the central conflicts that would play out over and over again in Cherokee history were not the inevitable by-products of the clash between civilization and savagery but the abject failure of English and American governments "to adopt a definite systematic policy of justice and humanity toward the Indians" (13). In a perceptive analysis of ethnocentric bias and policy failures that would constitute a central component of John Collier's reform efforts a decade later, Eaton notes the inherent failure in any platform that operates as a function of circumstance, prejudice, and self-interest and fails "to give due consideration" to "aboriginal" land claims and social customs (14). Whether referencing post-Revolutionary frontier violence of the late eighteenth century or the factional violence engendered by removal and the Civil War, Eaton time and again looks to failures of policy and human action to explain misunderstanding and conflict. In a moment of particular frustration, she writes: "Not for a moment does [the federal government] seem to have recognized its own responsibility for the state of affairs in the Cherokee Nation, where its secret agents by dark and devious methods had started a train of events which threatened to blot a nation out of existence..." (135). In this and other passages, Eaton frames conflict and violence within the Cherokee

Nation not as a tragic consequence of the regretful though inevitable absorption of an Indian people under the advance of a civilized nation, but as the willful and unjustifiable destruction of one civilized nation by another.

Eaton also attends to the ways in which US treaty and constitutional law not only failed to protect Cherokee people but was also instrumental in their dispossession. For Eaton, this is nowhere more evident than in the breakdown of constitutional authority following the Supreme Court's ruling in *Worcester v. Georgia* which upheld a clear, yet limited, form of Cherokee sovereignty and national status. Jackson refused to enforce the ruling on the grounds that Georgia's laws were within the limits of state's rights, an argument that he had only recently denied with respect to North Carolina's attempt to circumvent federal authority. Rather than the heroic defender of constitutional supremacy as one historian described him, Eaton observes that Jackson, in fact, enforced the law as he interpreted it rather than as the Court rendered it. In doing so, he undermined the constitution itself. Her observation that "consistency is not a jewel that adorns Andrew Jackson's crown, if perchance he wears one" captures at once the fragility of constitutional authority and republican government, as well as the impotence of a legal system that depends upon self-interested human beings to issue and enforce its rulings (70). Lest readers understand Jackson's actions strictly as a disagreement of legal philosophy, Eaton points to the graft, corruption, political favoritism and financial benefit Jackson's supporters received. "Many a political debt," Eaton writes, "was paid with the capital furnished by the sale of the Cherokee Nation, east" (99). Eaton's focus on the

long-standing legal and political relations between the federal government and Cherokee Nation, and her account of the legal and legislative mechanisms by which the federal government systematically undermined Cherokee sovereignty, exposes the colonialist roots of concepts like discovery and conquest and denaturalizes US claims to sovereignty and plenary power. Read in concert with a long series of legislative failures to fund annuities, executive ambivalence and inaction, and exploitative treaty negotiations, Eaton reads US law as applied to Native peoples as neither fair nor blind.

That such actions were perpetrated "at the hands of a government established less than three quarters of a century before upon the principle of justice and the rights of men" suggests not simply failures of policy but also an abject moral failure on the part of the federal government to live up to its own enlightened and civilized ideals, a fact Eaton emphasizes repeatedly (120). Her analysis of the civilization program suggests a critical understanding of the gulf between rhetoric and practice when applied to Indian people and Indian lands. She frames accusations of savagery, obstinate refusals to recognize Cherokee acculturation, removal arguments rooted in states' rights, and coercive treaty negotiations as the hypocritical rationalizations of those "who coveted Indian lands" in order to fulfill their own political and economic ambitions (28). Referring explicitly to Georgia citizens, Eaton writes that "[i]n truth this class of men opposed any policy for civilizing the Indians, since it would tend to attach them more firmly to the soil. And to many a white man just over the border the Indian country was the promised land of wealth and plenty which he hoped someday to possess" (28). While politicians and

reformists might well frame policies of civilization and acculturation as a necessary benevolence, they are desirable only to the extent that they result in the acquisition of Native land. When adopted explicitly for the purposes of strengthening tribal sovereignty and claims to territory, “benevolence” conveniently drops out of the conversation. Where the Cherokees' rapid acculturation to Anglo-American norms firmly located them as “exemplary” or “good” Indians, their adamant refusal to abandon their homelands and national identity places this privileged position in peril. In much the same way that western Indian autobiographies and frontier romances affirm settler-state claims to legitimacy by having their Indian protagonists announce the demise of their people, so Eaton understood the slippery nature of civilized discourse. The moment Indians refuse to accede defeat or yield “even one foot of ground,” they are disparaged as “bad,” “ungrateful,” or otherwise “ignorant” savages, regardless of how philosophically sound or legally unassailable their claims (110).

Eaton's repeated juxtapositions of the ignorance, duplicity, ineptitude and brutality of “civilized” Americans with enlightened, honorable and enormously capable Cherokees further highlights the instability of savage and civilized representational categories. Those associated with the removal are, not suprisingly, rendered in particularly derogatory terms. In addition to painting Andrew Jackson as a manipulative and duplicitous egomaniac (27), Eaton describes Georgia boomers and other frontier opportunists as “lawless rabble” and “petty tyrants” (104) and situates the well-argued petitions and memorials establishing moral and legal claims to sovereignty submitted by Ross and the

national council against the “astonishingly naive” arguments of Georgia politicians (110). Eaton particularly targets the brutal conditions of the internment camps under Winfield Scott's leadership and chronicles the horrors perpetrated by state militia and federal troops upon “disarmed and starving natives” (112). Describing this period of removal as a “Reign of Terror” (112-13), Eaton relates accounts of the armed removal of families from their homes even as their stock and possessions were being raided by white Georgians; the shooting of a deaf adolescent who, in fear, attempted to flee capture; the neglect of elderly or starving Cherokees left to die in their cabins; and armed manhunts in which Cherokee men, women and children were hunted down “like wild beasts” (114). She also describes the disease-infested and famine-ridden conditions of the stockades in which Cherokees were fed rotten meat and infested corn meal, when offered food at all, and subject to all forms of physical and sexual violation (117).

Eaton also spends a great deal of attention on the brutal conditions of the Trail of Tears, contrasting the systematic order, discipline, and concern for human life of the Cherokee-directed efforts to the chaos, disorganization, violence and utter lack of sympathy that characterized federal projects. She similarly situates the deplorable violence and destruction of the Civil War, to which both Cherokees and white Americans contributed, as a function of Union and Confederate military ineptitude (196-97) and a “petty game of personal ambition and state politics” (190). While Eaton is careful also to document and critique instances of Cherokee violence and lawlessness—the criminal activities of disaffected members of the Ridge faction (154) and the scorched earth tactics

employed by Stand Watie and his Confederate Cherokees (176), for instance—she as often as not understands them as regrettable products of the violence, trauma, and factional strife engendered by removal and the Civil War, economic crises resulting from delayed federal annuity payments, and a repeated pattern of moral and legal failure on the part of the United States to honor its international political commitments (176). Situated on the "right" side of the savage/civilized binary and possessing the full support of US political, legal, and military authority, white Americans in Eaton's narrative are offered no moral avenue through which to assuage their own "savage" behavior.

While vignettes like these challenge exclusivist US claims to racial and national superiority by demonstrating the capacity of "civilized" nations to engage in "savage" behavior, Eaton also intended them as appeals to generate sympathy, shame and anger in early twentieth-century progressivist-oriented audiences. Informed by a fear that Americans had become desensitized to this "tragic" yet familiar story of Cherokee, and by extension Indian, dispossession, Eaton laments that, lacking novelty, "[w]ith few exceptions the world read the story unmoved" (125). Eaton's intent to give a "sympathetic interpretation to their struggle" is geared less to cultivate a general sense of colonialist nostalgia in white Americans than a genuine effort to mobilize reader empathy, "pathos" and "pity" on behalf of *contemporary* Cherokee communities:

> If, peradventure, it comes not too late, like tears and flowers for the dead, who in life would have been made happier and better for the sympathetic word we had not sense to say, and the helping hand we had no time to

> extend, then a recreant nation may awake to the enormity of its injustice and inhumanity toward a valiant aboriginal people, and hasten to make what amends it may to their crushed and decadent descendants crowded back into remote corners of a country where once they were kings and emperors. (125)

While Eaton's language of Indian royalty, defeat and decadence strike contemporary ears as overly-sentimental and romantic, her concern for the welfare of rural Cherokees in the first decades of the twentieth century was well-founded. Just two decades before, Cherokees were citizens of sovereign tribal nations governed by laws and national institutions of their own making. They had access to as much of the over four million acre tribal estate as they could cultivate so long as they didn't intrude to within sixty acres of another citizen's improvements. Additionally, the Nation provided free access to elementary and higher education, institutions for the care of orphans and the sick, a national bi-lingual press, and health care. Their over two million dollar federal trust was supplemented by agriculture, cattle ranching, coal mining, forestry and other industries. Despite the fact that a relative few tribal citizens monopolized large portions of the tribal estate, abject poverty by all accounts was utterly absent.[32] When Henry Dawes, the architect of allotment, visited the Nation in the late nineteenth century, he observed “that there was not a family in that whole nation that had not a home of its own. There was not a pauper in that nation, and the nation did not owe a dollar” (Debo 21). The “problem,” as Dawes infamously understood it, lay in common land tenure. Absent individual

allotments of land to cultivate and improve, Indians would never develop the intense self-interest, competitiveness and "enterprise" that would allow them to fully "progress" as modern citizens (Debo 22).

Together, the passage of the General Allotment Act in 1887, the Curtis Act in 1898, and the Oklahoma enabling act in 1906 dissolved tribal governments, liquidated the tribal estate into individual allotments, transferred Indian institutions to state authority, and opened up "surplus lands" for white settlement. The resulting "checkerboard" effect geographically disrupted tribal communities and kinship networks by fracturing them into disconnected private property allotments. It also encouraged what one historian describes as an "orgy of exploitation" through which many allotments were mortgaged away or lost to unscrupulous land speculators and other opportunists (Debo x). Absent access to common lands, educational and other institutions, and the civil protections of tribal law, many Cherokees, particularly rural Cherokees "crowded back into remote corners," became impoverished, landless wards of the state.

By the time of the book's publication in 1921, many had begun to believe the allotment and assimilation policies had done more harm than good. Indians from reservation communities began challenging the arbitrary and often absolute authority of reservation agents, while white reformers had softened their antipathy to Indian cultures and began advocating the preservation of those elements of Native lifeways they thought virtuous.[33] While still largely geared toward assimilating Native students into white ways, even the federal Indian education system loosened restrictions on speaking tribal

languages, engaging in tribal cultural practices, and even encouraged the production of Native arts and crafts.[34] A year later, in 1922, President Coolidge formed the Council of One Hundred to consider Indian policy reform. The release of the Merriam Report six years later documenting the deplorable conditions of reservation life and the abject failure of assimilation and allotment paved the way for massive reforms led by John Collier throughout the next decade.

While, in retrospect, Eaton's tragic language of defeat and desperation is overstated—her own successful negotiation of modernitiy and that of countless other Cherokees and other Indians belie such narratives—her attempt to generate sympathy, compassion and outrage in her audience on behalf of those whom allotment had dispossessed and impoverished was a concern shared by many acculturated Cherokees and other "Red Progressive" contemporaries. Appealing to this more sympathetic strand of white reformism, Eaton's emphasis on the brutality, violence, trauma and suffering that Cherokees experienced throughout the nineteenth century can also be read as an effort to humanize Cherokee people. Often positioned as a "problem" or as objects of policy, ethnographic study and social engineering, Eaton's text attempts to recover the human element of this history by challenging exclusivist American claims to civilization, nationhood and modernity, and appealing to her audience's reformist sense of "common decency" for an exploited class and moral outrage at the abuse of power by large governmental bureaucracies and industrial interests. Written at least partially for a reformist-minded audience, the story of John Ross and the Cherokee Nation is for Eaton

also a story of white America sacrificing its own democratic ideals and historical legacy on the altars of self-interest at the expense not of a vanishing race but of another contemporary human community.[35] It is the story of Cherokee struggle, survival, persistence and moral right against a backdrop of broken promises, self-interest, hypocrisy and federal inaction perpetrated by "Great White Fathers" who continually failed to live up to their own enlightened ideals and manipulated hugely inequitable power relations to "blot a nation out of existence."

Largely subscribing to the ideology of progress and the presumed benefits of civilized ideals, Eaton was more interested in addressing the gulf that existed between those ideas and practice, and in critiquing the discursive place of Indian peoples and nations as antitheses to either civilization or progress. Like other Indian writers of the day, and similar to the other writers in this study, Eaton's project was not to undermine the fundamental premises of civilized discourse, but to challenge its anti-Indian bias and revise its Anglo-exclusivist assumptions. As in *Black Jack Davy*, *John Ross and the Cherokee Nation* situates both past and contemporary conditions not as the inevitable conclusion to the cosmic moral drama of civilization triumphing over savagery but as historically-situated consequence of willful human action. In doing so, Eaton leaves open the possibility for a "recreant," regretful, and presumably less cynical American nation to "make amends," distribute reparations and right historical wrongs on behalf of contemporary Cherokee and other Indian communities.

Disciplinary Interventions and Narrative Subversions

Eaton's text also advances a stridently nationalist narrative of Cherokee struggle, survival and continuance that requires her to subvert historiographic practices that dismissed local historical knowledge as unreliable and confined Indians to tragic plots that denied them historical agency and full humanity. One of Eaton's most significant yet subtle interventions in early twentieth century Indian history was to incorporate oral histories, personal narratives, and local institutional and family archives into her text as legitimate historical source material. In addition to Adair, Bartram and Royce, Eaton balanced more widely-known Indian histories by George Bancroft, S. G. Drake and McKenney and Hall with archival study of the Payne papers at the Newberry Library (before they were widely available) as well as historical sketches by James Mooney and fellow Cherokee historian Emmet Starr. She also supplemented governmental source material from the United States Indian Office with information from the local archives of the Sequoyah Historical Society in Claremore (of which she was a founding member), the Cherokee National records in Tahlequah, documents on Cherokee education from a local Tahlequah historian, and a “rare collections of letters and documents” from the Ross family archives. In my own brief survey of the source materials Eaton drew upon, hers was the first to consult local and family archives, probably a consequence of her personal relationships with those involved. At least until Starr's full *History* was published in 1921, Eaton's text is, at least in terms of source material, the most locally-sourced, Cherokee-centric history of Cherokee people to emerge out of the academy to that point.

It was also one of only three histories to acknowledge the influence of oral histories and personal narratives on the work (both Mooney's and Starr's texts do as well). Eaton acknowledges her debt to local Cherokee historians, specifically her grandmother, writing:

> If the background of the story adds anything to the merit of the book the credit is due to Mrs. Lucy Ward Williams, one of the last of the fireside historians of her race, whose vital interest in her people constrained her to repeat their story in season and out of season until it was rooted and grounded in my memory from earliest childhood. (Preface, np)[36]

While it is difficult to determine to what extent oral narratives influence the text—they are neither cited nor listed in the bibliography—one cannot help but speculate that Eaton's work not only *in* local archives but also *with* local archivists, historians, family members and others failed to yield details that found their way into the text. A number of vignettes in the text providing intimate details of Ross's early experiences, fanciful accounts of frontier trials and warfare, and personal drama and conflict absent in previous accounts suggest at least the likelihood of such possibilities. While these vignettes might well have emerged from Eaton's own imagination or from local archives, they might just as well have come from oral histories, family narratives or personal memories. The point, of course, is not to concretely identify oral elements in the text, but to acknowledge the influence that local histories had upon Eaton's life and her work as an academic historian. Considering that contemporary historians are still arguing for the acceptance of local

histories as legitimate sources of historical knowledge, we have to consider Eaton's nod to such traditions in the same preface where she indicts a history of misrepresentation and ignorance about Native peoples as significant.

In addition to its localized production, *John Ross and the Cherokee Indians* also disrupts historiographic conventions that position civilization and progress as antithetical to Indian nationhood and modernity. In much the same way that Oskison appropriates and subverts the conventions of the frontier romance to advance a narrative of Cherokee national sovereignty, Eaton similarly disrupts historiographic conventions to forward a history of Cherokee nationhood that is at once civilized and distinctly modern. One such convention denies historical agency to Native actors by relegating them to the margins of dominant national narratives. The histories previously surveyed provide useful examples. While documenting their interactions with specific tribal communities, both Adair's and Bartram's travel narratives largely speak of Indian peoples either in collective terms as "Cherokees," "Indians," "aborigines" and "savages" or according to exoticizing and largely erroneous social and political categories such as "chief," "shaman," "princess" or "king." Though both Royce's and Mooney's historical sketches identify individual military, political and historical figures, the extent to which they are depicted as legitimate historical agents capable of effecting change is restricted by the overwhelming sense of determinism embedded in their developmental narrative frames as well as the colonial center from which their narratives proceed. In all four accounts, "History" functions as a disembodied, fatalistic force forever acting upon Cherokee peoples,

moving evolutionarily from savagery to civilization and geographically from east to west.

Eaton's nationalist biography positions Ross and other Cherokee statesmen, military leaders, intellectuals and entrepreneurs as central agents in their own history, while US officials, Indian agents, military officers and other familiar historical figures are largely situated on the narrative's identifiably Cherokee national margins. The text chronicles Ross's travels through the frontier on Cherokee diplomatic engagements with federal officials, other Indian nations, and, later, Old Settler communities in the Arkansas territory. Drawing attention to the central role that Indian military alliance and resistance played throughout the southeast, Eaton notes both the might of Tecumseh's confederacy and the Creek resistance as well as the crucial contributions of Cherokee military detachments in putting down both movements. The text's treatment of both the origins and implementation of the civilization program as part of a well-thought out and carefully implemented *national* strategy of Cherokee adaptation subverts the program's presumably colonialist intentions. Mission education, Christianity, English literacy, plantation agriculture and written law are presented not as signs of assimilation and cultural loss but as tactical adaptations through which Cherokee peoples might better negotiate its changing relationship to the United States and assert its own claims to political autonomy. To this point, Eaton repeatedly highlights Ross's and other Cherokee leaders' facility with diplomacy and public debate, emphasizing time and again the very real gains they were able to win despite the generally coercive nature of negotiations. Sequoyah's development of the Cherokee syllabary, the composition of the Cherokee Constitution and the opening

of the national press are all celebrated as evidence not of European cultural superiority but of the adaptive "national" genius of Cherokee people. Eaton's recovery of historical agency and her depiction of the qualified adaptation of "civilized" institutions into Cherokee society rips both from their exclusivist EuroAmerican associations and locates them firmly within a Cherokee national context.

Eaton similarly disrupts the geographic directionality embedded in civilized discourse by shifting the narrative center from Adair's eastern colonial seaboard to important locations within the Cherokee Nation. While familiar sites of EuroAmerican political and economic power such as Savannah, Charleston, Philadelphia and Washington, DC are certainly present in the text, they exist on the periphery as foreign locations with respect to the Cherokee cultural and political centers of Chota, Hiwasee, Ustanali, New Echota, Red Clay and Tahlequah. From the narrative's opening scenes of Ross's childhood at Tahnoovayah on the Coosa River to its conclusion with his burial at Park Hill, the great majority of Eaton's history takes place within the territorial boundaries of the Cherokee Nation. Considering the ways in which colonial and settler-state narratives about Indigenous others mobilize space to delimit narrative and political possibilities for Native peoples, Eaton's geographic reorientation within the Cherokee Nation is politically significant. As Phil Deloria writes, by "mapping space and human difference together in ways that [use] the past to naturalize colonial dominance," colonialist geographies delimit narrative and epistemological conditions of possibility for Native peoples (Deloria, "Historiography" 8). Divested of their historical, cultural and

political content, Indigenous homelands are transformed into empty wildernesses (*terra nullius*), savage frontiers and lawless—because Indian—territories where Indian savages are prevented from doing anything but reveling in their savagery. Rendered as aesthetic categories of knowledge, Indigenous sacred places become "not just the place where civilization and wilderness made American democracy" but "the ragged edge of history itself, where historical and nonhistorical defied and defined each other" (Klein 7). If, as Klein observes, we can learn more about "History" by "exploring its edges and mapping its contraries, complements and cognates," we might do well to read Eaton's remapping of the wilderness as a Cherokee national territory inhabited not by ignorant savages but intelligent, sophisticated citizens, as the Cherokee contrary to "civilized" appropriations of Cherokee space.

Complimenting these micro-narrative subversions, Eaton's text also challenges the conventions and assumptions about Indian biography and life writing traditions. That she chose to write about a historical Indian figure from the nineteenth century is not surprising. As Krupat has argued, Indians had long been biographical and autobiographical subjects for American writers and publishers. Whether demonized as murderous savages (Metacomet, Pontiac), mourned as tragic victims of civilization's onslaught (Black Hawk, Chief Joseph, Black Elk), ennobled as primitive warriors, orators and statesman (Tecumseh, Crazy Horse, Sitting Bull, Geronimo) or held as exemplars of the virtues of assimilation and civilization (Eastman, early Standing Bear, Crashing Thunder), Native biographies and autobiographies are almost always framed as the tragic

complement to the comedic narrative of American conquest, progress and expansion.[37] Though speaking specifically of early- and mid-nineteenth century autobiographies, Krupat's schema applies just as well to biographical and fictional treatments of Native peoples:

> Whereas victory is the enabling condition of western autobiography, defeat is the enabling condition of Indian autobiography … For it is only when the Indian subject … acknowledges his defeat, when he becomes what Patterson calls a "State-prisoner," that he can appear as a "hero" … Native American decline is the necessary condition for the comic ascent of Euramerican civilization and it is by means of this particular structure—the apparent tragedy as actual comedy—that the silent, absent editor speaks his acceptance of progressivist ideology, confirming the inevitability of Indian defeat. (48-49)

The same might well be said of the silent, absent biographer, historian or statesman. In much the same way that Adair, Jefferson and generations of reformists presumed a civilize-or-perish attitude toward Cherokee peoples, and as Royce consigned the survival of the Cherokee Nation to hands of "fate," Indian "heroes" as narrative objects all meet their tragicomic end through death on the battlefield, defeat on reservations, resignation in Wild West Shows, or successes in the boarding school classroom. Where survival is an option, it is invariably predicated on the erasure of identifiable markers of Indian cultural or political identity. In historiographic and narrative paradigms based upon discovery,

conquest, civilization and progress, *Indian* national figures must necessarily die, yield or disappear in order that enlightened revolutionary fathers, heroic frontier fighters and sacrificial Civil War veterans might assume their place as US national heroes. As exemplary representatives of their communities, the defeat of Native protagonists—whether framed as tragedy, comedy or, in Royce's case, irony—stands discursively for the defeat of their cultures, peoples, and nations. To allow Indigenous heroes to live *as heroes* would be, to borrow from Alfred, an intrusion upon settler-state mythologies that presume legitimacy by assuming the inevitable disappearance of Native peoples.[38]

Eaton's history performs such an intrusion by taking as its subject a heroic Cherokee national figure whose life's work culminated, in his own lifetime, not in the dissolution of his national community but in its survival and persistence. To be sure, Ross plays a central role in historical accounts by other writers. Both Royce and Mooney, for instance, situate him as a primary actor in their narratives of events from the removal crisis in the 1830s through his death thirty years later. Looking back at Ross's life, what strikes Royce as "remarkable" was not his dogged defense of Cherokee national autonomy or the intellectual and philosophical arguments he and his contemporaries advanced about nationhood and sovereignty. Rather, Royce is struck by Ross's inexplicable dedication to "the full-blood as against the mixed-blood members of the nation" despite his own mixed-blood "Scotch-Indian parentage" (348). Mistaking racial identification for political commitment, Royce misreads Ross's dedication not so much to full-bloods as a racial group as to their staunch political position against removal and

insistence on their right to exist as a self-determined nation in their homelands. Royce's collapse of political disagreement into a racialized conflict between mixed-bloods and full-bloods also ignores the fact that while cultural orientation, parentage, class and politics often converged to produce factionalism, each party counted allies from a range of racial, cultural, and economic backgrounds.

While Eaton also documents the schisms that emerged between conservative and progressive Cherokees, and while her "civilized" frame privileges acculturated actors and political positions over those of conservatives and traditionalists, Eaton frames internal conflicts over removal less as a consequence of racial antagonisms than fundamental political differences over national policy. Believing their legal, moral and philosophical arguments to nationhood unassailable, Ross and the majority of the Nation cautioned patience and resistance. Despairing that they would ever receive a fair hearing in US courts and legislative chambers, Ridge allies encouraged removal as a means to avoid the complete dispossession and impoverishment of the Nation. While Eaton acknowledges self-interest as a partial motivation for both groups—she emphasizes this more with respect to earlier removal advocates and to a lesser extent to the Ridge/Treaty party (32)—she ultimately situates both groups as committed nationalists acting on what they respectively felt was in the best interest of the Nation (74-75). Though she later castigates the Treaty Party's actions as fraudulent and duplicitous, they are not rendered as villains so much as Cherokees caught in an impossible situation. Similarly, though she expresses horror at the "brutal and savage" reprisal killings that occurred later, Eaton frames them

not as simple acts of revenge or anachronistic expressions of the "good savage ethics" of blood law, but as legally-sanctioned executions according to Cherokee constitutional provisions forbidding land cessions that they themselves authored (133). Eaton's focus on this explicitly *political* component of factional strife not only renders the mixed-blood Ross's defense of Cherokee sovereignty alongside conservative full-bloods less "remarkable"—in this sense it mirrors Ned Warrior's alliance with non-Indians against threats to Cherokee sovereignty and his rights as a citizen in Oskison's *BJD*. It also refuses the determinism and fatalism embedded in intractable racialized antagonisms, a problem that Lynn Riggs would examine twenty years later in his play, *The Cherokee Night*.

Where Royce reads Ross's life as an anomoly, James Mooney more explicitly situates it as an allegory for the history of the Cherokee Nation. For Mooney, Ross's education in Cherokee lifeways, social norms and politics, complimented by the familiarity with English literacy, Christianity and mercantile economics he gained from his father, situated him perfectly to emerge as leader and mediator for his national community. His dedication to the more conservative-traditional element of Cherokee society and his commitment to remaining on the lands of his ancestors further ingratiated him with the ethnologist. Though Ross, like the Cherokee Nation itself, had greatly acculturated to western social and political norms—the apogee of which for Mooney is the adoption of a representative constitutional government—their continued residence in the land of their ancestors, combined with the persistence of cultural conservatism,

positioned them as both an authentically-Indian and a civilized nation. Aligned with the "Great Man" theory of history, Mooney's conclusion that "[i]n this long period, comprising the momentous episodes of the Removal and the War of the Rebellion [Civil War], it may be truly said that his history is the history of the Nation," seems to confirm Ross's place as a Cherokee national hero (114).

Yet, as with Royce's confounding relegation of Cherokee national history to the hands of fate, Mooney embeds both Ross and the Cherokee Nation within a tragic paradigm that denies the possibility of a modern Indian nation. For what is important for Mooney is not the *national* history of the Cherokee *Nation* but the *aboriginal* history of the Cherokee *people*. Shortly after relaying events leading up the removal, Mooney writes: "With the final removal of the Cherokee from their native country and their reunion and reorganization under new conditions in Indian Territory in 1840 their aboriginal period properly comes to a close *and the rest may be dismissed in a few paragraphs* as of concern rather to the local historian than to the ethnologist" (146, emphasis added). Arguing that the cultural trauma and political disorganization effected by the removal completed and finalized the movement from "hunter and warrior" to "farmer and mechanic" (146), Mooney laments that those in the west exchanged ballplay, age-old ceremonial cycles and traditional political councils for railroad contracts and cattle leases dominated by "shrewd mixed-blood politicians, bearing white men's names and speaking the white man's language, and frequently with hardly enough Indian blood to show itself in the features" (147). Conflating cultural conservatism and residence in

traditional lands with tribal authenticity, and recuperating the racialized rhetoric of mixed-blood corruption and degeneracy propagated by self-interested territorial advocates and Christian reformers, Mooney's narrative suggests an irrevocable schism between what he considered the truly "aboriginal" Cherokees remaining in the east and those in Indian Territory who are Cherokee only in name and political status. As a representative figure in that history, Ross's post-Removal narrative must be read in the same way. Aligned with the western biographies Krupat discusses above, Mooney's history locks both Ross and the Cherokee Nation into a colonialist-oriented comedic plot of Indian civilization and national emergence predicated on the tragic loss of aboriginal authenticity.

As with the progressive reformers of his time, and against the rhetorical and political efforts of Cherokee writers and politicians from Eaton's generation, the idea of an *Indian* nation was, for Mooney, epistemologically inconceivable. It is no wonder, then, that Eaton brackets out questions of authenticity and cultural loss: in discourses that set tribalism and nationhood in irrevocable opposition, Cherokee claims to modernity and sovereignty must necessarily come at the expense of tribal identity. In order to avoid this rabbit hole, Eaton claims Ross unwaveringly as a Cherokee national hero based not on his relationship to tradition or authenticity but upon his commitment to Cherokee sovereignty, his willingness to perform "the duties of a citizen of the Cherokee Nation," and his patriotic republican vision "of a greater Cherokee Nation, a republic of civilized Indians that should be the wonder and admiration of the world" (22, 57). For Eaton,

Ross's patriotic ardor and citizen ethic reflects a larger national commitment to "strengthening the government and welding the Cherokees into a strong, united nation in order that they might present a solid front of resistance to any further project for removal" (38). Though framed as a chronicle of "the evolution from barbarism to civilization of one of the most progressive tribes of North American Indians," Eaton's story is also one of national struggle by Cherokee citizens "to maintain their *tribal* identity and ancestral domains against the overwhelming tide of economic development" advancing from the east (Preface, emphasis added). Like Mooney, Eaton positions Ross's biography as a Cherokee national allegory. Unlike Mooney she reads it not as a story of the tragic loss of tribal identity as a precondition of modernity and nationhood, but as the adaptive emergence of an explicitly modern *tribal* nation.

Since the death of the Indian hero and his accession of defeat are fundamental components of fictional narratives of Native absence as well as Indian biographies and autobiographies, and since Eaton's biography ends with the death and burial of her national hero, *how* Ross's death relates with respect to the rest of the text deserves some comment. The book's final chapter, "Reconstruction of the Cherokee Nation," documents the coercive process by which Cherokees and other Confederate-allied nations were forced into massive land cessions and legal provisions restricting tribal sovereignty as a condition of resuming the trust relationship with the Union. Though framed under the guise of legal authority, Eaton notes the essentially exploitative conditions they imposed on tribal governments. As with her critique of graft, political favoritism and self-interest

that defined the removal, Eaton similarly characterizes the post-Civil War treaties as thinly veiled assaults on tribal sovereignty and systematic attempts to reduce the tribal estate "to mere reserves" and to open up Indian lands to white settlement and, eventually, US territorial status. Under threats of tribal division, the National party, led by Ross, concluded the Treaty of 1866 on July 17th. Described by Eaton as "[a]t best … a three-cornered compromise which pleased nobody," the treaty mandated land cessions, amnesty for war crimes, repeal of Cherokee confiscation laws, guarantees of citizenship and property for freedmen, future promises to cede railroad rights of way, and provisions to establish federal courts in the Territory (207). Eaton wryly notes that "The federal government, as usual, came out the greatest gainer" (207). Though seriously ill at the time, Ross led the delegation which concluded on July 19th. A month later, he passed away in Washington DC, away from his beloved Park Hill and the Nation he fought he entire life to protect.[39]

In much the same way that Oskison immortalizes the sacrificial death of Jim Dawes as a selfless and heroic act of Cherokee patriotism, Eaton too situates Ross as a heroic man who consistently held the admiration, respect, and confidence of his people and whose commitment to Cherokee sovereignty remains unparalleled in history (208). Though acknowledging, in retrospect, Ross's political miscalculations as well as his personal flaws, Eaton on the whole dismisses accusations of despotism, corruption and embezzlement as the uniformed and biased opinions of political opponents and other "prejudiced persons not competent to judge the man fairly" (208). Rather, she elevates

Ross as a paradigm of moral virtue and exemplar of Cherokee national character:

> To understand him it must not be forgotten that he was first, last and always a Cherokee *Indian*, a citizen of the Cherokee Nation which was to him a sovereign, independent nation. His consuming desire and purpose were to serve and protect to the best of his ability this nation at whose head he stood so proudly and staunchly for many years. *He had no other patriotism*, a fact which can be understood and appreciated fully, perhaps, only by those who have lived under conditions similar to those under which he lived and have possessed sentiments and attachments akin to his. (209, emphases added)

Such passages at strongly suggest that Eaton considers herself and others of her generation among those who share the "sentiments and attachments" that defined Ross's patriotism and nationalist commitment to his people. That she elected to write a highly-localized heroic biography of a Cherokee figure as an allegory of Cherokee national history within a discipline and genre that largely confined Native historical figures to the past in decidedly non-national plots of death and decline at least begs the question. What is evident is that Ross's death at the end of the text is in no way meant to signal the death of the Cherokee Nation. As a matter of both historical fact and narrative design, Ross's life, as Eaton presents it, not only guarantees national preservation and survival, but also provides a model of moral courage and political commitment through which the expression of Cherokee national character might survive into subsequent generations.

If, as Robert Sayre argues, historical biographies and autobiographies at some fundamental level express the values, beliefs, ideals, and commitments of a national community, then Eaton's apotheosis of Ross's life as an exemplary model of Cherokee national character must be read in similar terms. For, as Sayre writes, the biographical and autobiographical subject "is not only a 'who,' he is also a 'what'—what he lived for, what he believed in and worked for" (150). Eaton's text leaves no room for ambiguity with respect to such questions: Ross lived for the Cherokee Nation, believed profoundly in the moral right and legal authority of Indian peoples to exist as modern nations according to their own designs, and worked his entirely life toward that goal. That his life, as presented in Eaton's text, parallels not the death of the Cherokee Nation but its continuance absorbs the *tragic* elements of removal, factionalism and the Civil War into a larger Cherokee-centric comedy of tribal-national survival through the continued expression of Cherokee national character modeled on one of its own Founding Fathers.

Writing from Home, Telling New Stories

Contemporary Indigenous historians have long argued that Native historiography will remain woefully incomplete until historians begin to incorporate the vast, largely untapped archive of personal recollections, family histories, community-centered narratives of experience, and the collective historical memory of Indian national communities. Seen as a crucial component of peoplehood, this body of vernacular knowledge provides communities with a sense not only of their origins but also of their

moral, ethical, ceremonial and spiritual relationships to place, to each other, and to other human and non-human communities.[40] Though locally-produced and internally-directed, such bodies of knowledge are not insular, but, as LeAnne Howe writes, attempt to "pull all the elements together of the storyteller's tribe, meaning the people, the land, and multiple characters and all their manifestations and relations, and connect these in past, present and future milieus" (42). To incorporate such information into historical practice as legitimate forms of knowledge fundamentally shifts the narrative focus from a settler-state to an Indigenous center—what Donald Fixico terms "writing from home"—better able to account for the complex dynamics of conflict and exchange between Indians and non-Indians, to understand Indian peoples as actors and agents in history as well as producers of historical knowledge themselves, and to escape the linear teleology, historical inevitability and moral resignation inherent to paradigms of conquest, civilization, progress and state-national expansion that have conventionally organized Indian histories.[41]

While correcting historical inaccuracies, combating stereotypes, recovering historical agency, and identifying sites of subversion and resistance remain significant disciplinary interventions, they are not sufficient ends in themselves but tactics within a much larger strategy of decolonization. One one hand, as Alfred writes, refusing historical and legal fictions of state sovereignty predicated on the principle of conquest recovers the plural histories of Indigenous national contestation that state-national histories explicitly deny.[42] By reframing the end-game of conquest as a continuing

process of political contestation, Indigenous histories open a space to reformulate ideas of nationhood that transcend state-derived definitions of sovereignty and nationhood which confine Native peoples to the past and deny their contemporary national presence as "a serious challenge to the legitimacy of the state" ("Sovereignty" 469). At the same time, contemporary histories will, as Devon Mihesuah and Phil Deloria argue, attend to historical circumstances that produced and continue to produce conflict, oppression, and violence while also engaging the continuing material and social effects of colonialism on Native communities.[43]

To "write from home," then, is to approach Native history from the inside, within the context of tribal traditions and personal and familial experiences as well as with an eye for the larger implications of knowledge production for Indian communities. It is to identify the ways in which non-Indian authored historical archives have constructed historical time and space and positioned Native peoples ambivalently as central to its own narrative designs yet consigned to its historical, legal, and political margins.[44] And it is the process of challenging those histories, writing oneself out of the discursive and epistemological binds of state-national narratives, and levying claims not only to historical agency and nation-peoplehood but also to humanity itself.

Written in the early twentieth century, Eaton's text remarkably speaks to many of the concerns issued by contemporary historians and critical theorists. Its use of local archives, family collections and oral histories alongside conventional historical sources locates her history firmly within Cherokee historical contexts and privileges forms of

knowledge conventionally excluded from historical accounts. Its negotiation with and critique of civilized discourse and its subversion and revision of historiographic, generic and narrative conventions of Indian history and autobiography also situate Cherokee history within—and at times against—larger disciplinary and discursive fields. Eaton's attention to political and diplomatic relationships between the Cherokee Nation and the US, and her refusal of tragic, vanishing narratives of Indian disappearance frame Cherokee-US history not as a clash between civilized and savage cultures but as political contestation between national sovereigns. In doing so, the text recovers a history of multiple sovereignties in the Americas that state-national narratives explicitly deny. Not simply an oppositional narrative, Eaton's history also seeks to gain the sympathy and compassion of non-Indian progressives and mobilize a historical sense of shame and guilt in service of reform and reparations on behalf of contemporary Cherokee and Indian communities. Negotiating the disciplinary restrictions of conventional historiography, the discursive restrictions of civilization, and the generic conventions of Indian biography and Indian history, Eaton tells a story that is at once a critique of exploitation and graft, a celebration of Cherokee survival and continuance, and a profoundly human story of a people's struggle to exist according to their own vision of themselves.

At the same time, her reliance on the fundamental value of civilization and progress—though not civilized discourse—and her use of the “Great Man” theory of history limits her narrative in significant ways. Considering Eaton's own precarious position as a Cherokee female historian, her elision of Cherokee women from her history

is striking. Eaton's text is absent any significant female protagonist and she mentions the historical centrality of matrilineality and the pervasive influence of the Cherokee clan structure only in passing. Though she acknowledges that Ross's mother was profoundly committed to Cherokee traditions and that she was adamant about passing that knowledge down to her son, she is never mentioned again. Familiar Cherokee female historical figures are also conspicuously absent or merely alluded to in passing. Catherine Brown, for instance, is mentioned briefly as a laudatory example of mission education and Christian acculturation while others like Ross's first wife, Quatie, are romanticized as sacrificial mothers and caretakers. Eaton's chronicle of Cherokee national emergence also completely ignores the impact of nationalization on gender and sexual relationships within the Nation, never considering the ways in which Cherokee women lost public political, economic and diplomatic power to increasingly affluent, mixed-blood men. Her treatment of the civilization program under Jefferson is similarly shallow, depicting the gendered reorganization of labor and political influence embedded in the program as historical givens. In perpetuating such elisions, the text reinforces the idea, as Perdue has argued, that the story of "History" as change over time signaled by cultural and material innovation and adaptation was understood largely to be the domain of "great men" like Ross.

A function of her civilized frame, and her explicit focus on matters diplomatic and political, Eaton's history also minimizes the significance of traditionalism and marginalizes the influence of conservatism in Cherokee national development. Though

Eaton mentions a conservative rebellion against centralized authority in the 1820s—identified today as White Path's rebellion—she fails to document the extensive political, cultural and social resistance to Christianity and acculturation documented by others such as Royce and Mooney. Consequently, conservative-traditionalist figures, while at times alluded to in the narrative, function more as oppositional touchstones for the ideas, motivations, and actions of the dominant mixed-blood leaders. Against the "progressive" "civilized" ideas of the "mixed-blood" population she positions the "good savage ethics" of conservative full-bloods or the "wild beasts and wilder men" that populated the pre-removal Indian Territory and points west (20, 120, 171-72). Thus, while Eaton at one point acknowledges that many of the gains made following removal were at least partially due to the efforts of "a number of strong and able men in some whose veins ran no drop of white blood," the rest of the narrative makes clear that the story situates national struggle and persistence as a decidedly mixed-blood affair (178). Eaton's text thus exhibits a decided ambivalence about full-bloods. It at once admires their connection to tradition while also lamenting their "backwardness," celebrates their connection to land and physical prowess while also condescending to their lack of manners and civility, and holds them up as candidates for acculturation while also defending them against exploitation and oppression. Full-bloods, tradition, and conservatism for Eaton, as for Bartram, Mooney, and the western biographers, function as touchstones to a primitive tribal past that at once confirms the noble Indian heritage of the acculturated, mixed-blood protagonists while also acting as an evolutionary barometer for their road on the

path to civilization.

As Devon Mihesuah observes, such narratives perpetuate the privilege of "mixed-blood, Christianized, 'white Cherokees' who support colonialism, giving the impression to the modern U.S. public that all Cherokees look and act like their colonizers and they are an acceptable enough tribe to claim as part of their exotic, yet civilized, heritage" ("Should" 154). While Mihesuah's gross implication of all mixed-blood Cherokees as abject colonial sympathizers is absurd, her overall point suggests one of the central limitations of Eaton's discursive frame. By fundamentally holding on to the savage/civilized distinction, the text recuperates discursively the equation of civilization with both history and modernity. In doing so, it denies a legitimate place for traditional practices, relations, and beliefs in the national narrative except as cultural curiosities or anachronistic ties to "primitive" practices and institutions. From this perspective, Eaton's history doesn't forward historical, moral and legal claims to nationhood for the Cherokee people *as aboriginal First Americans*, but as aboriginal peoples who had more than proven their capacity to acculturate to EuroAmerican cultural and social norms.

Despite these limitations, what Eaton accomplished is still quite extraordinary. Just as nineteenth century Cherokee politicians mobilized the rhetoric of civilization in service of Cherokee national interests, Eaton appropriates civilized discourse in order to tell a story of Cherokee nationhood and political leadership that is both Indian and civilized, both tribal and thoroughly modern. Staking claims to humanity, history, modernity, and nationhood, Eaton's subversions of historiographic and biographical

conventions effectively re-situates Ross's life and the story of the Cherokee Nation as legitimate subjects of history every bit as significant as laudatory biographies of revolutionary fathers and patriotic epics of the winning of the west. In Eaton's narrative, Cherokee national history, exemplified in the life and political commitments of its most recognizable leader, is a story of Cherokee tribal innovation, adaptation, resistance, and survival. Written in an intellectual and political climate that still conflated EuroAmerican social, cultural, and political norms with enlightened subjectivity, historical agency, modernity, and nationhoood, Eaton's positioning of the Cherokee Nation as an acculturated “civilized” nation alongside England, France and the United States is also an argument for the right of Indian peoples to exist as modern nation-peoples. In these and other ways, Eaton's history deserves consideration as a significant critical intervention in Cherokee historiography.

Notes

1 For more information on the series, visit http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/weshallremain/the_films/ about.

2 For obvious reasons, the removal holds a much less prominent place in national and community narratives of belonging for citizens of the Eastern Band of the Cherokee Nation. In a private discussion, Cherokee language instructor and AniKituah dancer Bo Taylor remarked that while the removal was undoubtedly significant, it was but one moment in a much longer history of the Cherokee people, a point that the filmmakers also sought to express.

3 To this point, Laurence Hauptmann observes that history in Native communities emerges mostly as collective history rooted in family relations, or heritage, connecting peoples to one another across time and space through historical, if not contemporary, bonds of kinship. Hardly an abstract narrative of actors and events, history is for Native peoples "lived memory" self-consciously used to "maintain and strengthen [tribal] identity" (60).

4 Hauptman, ibid. See also Lowery 499-522.

5 Tuhiwai Smith 29. See also Memmi 91, 105; Axtell "Ethnohistory" 14-15; O'Brien xi-xxiii.

6 See also Mankiller, "Introduction" xiii-xix; A. Ortiz 3-10; Trask 120-21; Edmunds 159; Lowery 518.

7 Fixico, "Introduction" 8; A. Ortiz 14-15.

8 Smith 26; Alfred, "Sovereignty" 469.

9 Such sources include McKenney and Hall's *History of the Indian Tribes of North America* (1855), James Mooney's *Myths of the Cherokees* (1897-98); Bancroft's *History of the United States* (1834), S. G. Drake's *Biography and History of the American Indians in North America* (1857) and *Early History of Georgia* (1872), and Payne's papers held in the Newberry Library.

10 Braund 45.

11 Ibid 50-51.

12 Tuhiwai Smith 8.

13 For more on the "domestication" imperative embedded in US national narratives, legal discourse, and federal Indian law, see Bruyneel 27-65 and Rifkin 3-74.

14 Harper, "Introduction" xxi-xxvii. A Quaker from Pennsylvania, Bartram was commissioned by a London doctor in 1772 to travel throughout the Florida territories in order to document their flora and fauna as well as their Indigenous inhabitants. He set out officially in 1773 and over the next four years traveled extensively throughout Florida, the Carolinas, Georgia, and what was then the Louisiana territory collecting plant specimens and producing illustrations of the people and fauna he encountered. Though the Revolutionary War and initial disinterest by potential subscribers delayed the book's publication, it was finally put to print in 1791 by Philadelphia publishers James and Johnson and published in January of the next year. Subscribers to the limited US printing included George Washington, John Adams and Thomas Jefferson. It also found an audience abroad; in addition to publications in London and Ireland, it was also translated into German, French and Dutch. According to Francis Harper, *Travels* found its way to the shelves of British romanticists William Wordsworth and Samuel Coleridge, the latter maintaining that he had Bartram's text in mind while composing *Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner*.

15 Bartram 387, 544.

16 Cf. Franklin's "Remarks Concerning the Savages" (1784).

17 With little irony, Jefferson confidently asserted, "While they are learning to do better on less land, our increasing numbers will be calling for more land, and thus a coincidence of interests will be produced between those who have lands to spare, and want other necessaries, and those who have such necessaries to spare, and want lands." "Letter to Benjamin Hawkins, Feb. 18, 1803." Web. Date accessed: September 19, 2007.

18 "Letter to Governor William H Harrison, Feb. 27, 1803." Web. Date accessed: September 19, 2007.

19 Prucha 107-180.

20 Ibid 198-210, Hoxie, *Final* 1-15.

21 Prucha 206-07.

22 Hoxie, *Final* 16-29.

23 Prucha 232-41,

24 Prucha 224-32.

25 Holm rightly notes that "reformer" is "something of a misnomer" to describe late nineteenth and early twentieth century "Friends of the Indian" organizations. Staunch advocates of assimilation, they believed in laissez-faire capitalism, economic orthodoxy, limited government, rabid individualism and progressive human social evolution, of which the US stood as exemplar (15). They were, essentially, ethnocentric Christian social Darwinists only partially troubled with self-righteous moral guilt over what they viewed as the "Indian problem." They translated the roots of this "problem" not to treaty abrogations, scorched earth military campaigns, or policy failures but to cultural and racial deficiencies inherent to tribal lifeways and Native peoples themselves. Ironically, they were often also proponents of conservationism, environmentalism and world order even as they "had all but destroyed Native American peoplehood and the Indian knowledge of the environment" (53).

26 Hoxie *Final* 21-23. Such attitudes resulted in a conflicted ambivalence between sympathy and resignation toward American Indians. Where professional ethnologists sought to salvage Indian cultural forms—though not the cultures or peoples themselves—before they vanished from the earth, reformers hoped to avoid their complete destruction by "raising" Indians to a higher level of progress while attempting to minimize the trauma their rapid "advancement" might induce. The presumption of inevitability embedded in Morgan's theories provided all involved "comfort in the idea that cruel policies such as removal or punitive warfare," and later forced assimilation and allotment, were regrettable but "unavoidable steps along the road to progress" (Hoxie, *Final* 18). Powell's innovation to Morgan's theory was to remove this ambiguity by focusing on the positive implications of progress and adding a final category of development to Morgan's model: enlightenment. Equating political and economic complexity and technological and scientific advancement with enlightened progress, Powell believed that civilization was heading inevitably toward a period of universal enlightenment, international peace and benevolence.

27 Hoxie *Final* 21-23.

28 Rifkin 3-74.

29 Burton 142, Prucha 255-56. For an unparalleled examination of the various strategies Cherokees and other Five Tribes nations deployed to resist territorialization, see Denson.

30 For an outline of specific rhetorical strategies, see Denson 28-51. Individual chapters examine in greater detail how Cherokees deployed such strategies in response to specific historical challenges.

31 See also Bruyneel 27-64.

32 Debo 5-18.

33 Holm, *Great* 131-52.

34 I deal with the period in more detail in chapter 4.

35 For more on the historical relationship between empathy and rights discourse, see Hunt (2008).

36 Though Eaton doesn't explicitly mention it, Lucy Ward Williams was in fact her maternal grandmother and a descendant of Cherokee Beloved Woman, Nanye'hi/Nancy Ward. Aside from this notation, neither Eaton nor the contributor of her forward identifies explicitly identifies her as a Cherokee. Considering that Eaton openly identified as both Cherokee and Indian in other situations throughout her life, this omission probably reflects more a disciplinary prejudice in favor of disinterested objectivity than any willful attempt to cover up her national and ethnic identity.

37 Krupat, *For* 40-49.

38 Referring specifically to nationalist narratives that deny both the past existence and contemporary presence of Indigenous nationhood as a means of confirming settler-state legitimacy, Alfred writes: “The maintenance of state dominance over Indigenous peoples rests on the preservation of the myth of conquest, and the 'noble but doomed' defeated nation status ascribed to Indigenous peoples in the state sovereignty discourse. Framing Indigenous peoples in the past allows the state to maintain its own legitimacy by disallowing the fact of Indigenous peoples' nationhood to intrude upon its own mythology. It has become clear that Indigenous people imperil themselves by accepting formulations of nationhood that prevent them from transcending the past. One of the fundamental injustices of the colonial state is that it relegates Indigenous peoples' rights to the past, and constrains the development of Indigenous societies by only allowing that activity which supports its own necessary illusion—that Indigenous peoples do not today present a serious challenge to the legitimacy of the state” (469).

39 Ross died in Washington City, on 1 August 1866. Initially buried in Delaware, the

National Council decreed that his body be escorted back to the Nation by William P. Ross, Jesse Bushyhead, and Riley Keys in May 1867. The coffin lay in state until the 1st of June, when it was buried in Ross Cemetery with great solemnity and ceremony.

40 Holm, “Peoplehood” 14.

41 Fixico, “American” 553 and “Introduction” 8; A. Ortiz 1-16; Axtell 14; Hagan 29-42; Smith 28; Memmi 91, 105. For critiques of how colonialist time reaffirms state sovereignty, see Bauerkemper 28, 50; A. Ortiz, 1-16; P. Deloria, “Historiography” 8-20; Edmunds 159-77.

42 For how national histories and narratives attempt to deny plurality, reduce difference, and silence dissent, see also Young 1-3, 35; Bhabha “Introduction” 1-4 and “Dissimi-Nation” 292-301; and Brunyeel 5-8.

43 P. Deloria, “Historiography” 19; Mihesuah “Should” 144. Mihesuah's catalog of concerns include everything from legal issues like treaty rights, territorial jurisdiction, and resource management to acute health issues like diabetes, obesity and access to healthy foods to social problems like alcoholism and substance abuse, and violence against women and children.

44 David Edmunds writes that “the Indian” played a significant role in the intellectual and political construction of a distinctly American national identity, particularly for a young republican nation struggling to find its place in the community of nations. “Not only did their 'republican virtue' separate them from European corruption, but their achievements assured them that they no longer were 'primitives' like the Indians. The Indians symbolized a wilderness that was being transformed and conquered, and the tribespeople's demise was indicative of the 'grad dame of progress' sweeping westward across the United States” (174). For colonial ambivalence see Bhabha above.

Chapter Three: Disrupting Blood and the Politics of Recognition in Lynn Riggs's *The Cherokee Night*

On March 3, 2007, Cherokee Nation voters amended the 1997 constitution to define citizenship strictly as a function of direct lineal descent to an ancestor on the final "by blood" Dawes Rolls of 1906. The amendment emerged as a political response by some in the Nation to intensified claims to citizenship by descendants of Cherokee freedmen and the ruling by the Cherokee Supreme Court which supported those claims. Though freedmen and their descendants had long fought for recognition as fully participating citizens of the Cherokee Nation throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, it wasn't until their disenfranchisement by a 1983 Cherokee statute which tied citizenship explicitly to Cherokee "blood" that they began to mobilize politically and openly challenge the racialized undertones of such policies. While some viewed the amendment's passage as an exercise of Indigenous self-determination and an affirmation of the continued significance of family and kinship relations to contemporary Cherokee political identity, others read it as a cynical manipulation of Cherokee law motivated by political self-interest. Still others saw it as a tragic holdover of increasingly racialized legal understandings of Cherokee national and cultural belonging dating back to the nineteenth century. In the context of such disparate views, this move to bring the amendment to a citizen-referendum hit a nerve that reverberated out of the Nation, across Indian Country and into legislative chambers and federal courts. It also makes visible the

fragility of tribal sovereignty in Indian Country in the twenty-first century, subject as it is to Congressional challenge and federal intervention, and raises important ethical questions about how contemporary Indian nations might most productively exercise sovereignty and self-determination.

As a specific consequence of the racial politics of Cherokee nationalism, the freedmen situation speaks to the complicated matrix of family, kinship, culture, race, nation and the production of historical and community knowledge through which Cherokee national identity and belonging is often negotiated and experienced in Cherokee communities.[1] Concerned explicitly with these relationships, Lynn Riggs's *The Cherokee Night*, conceived in 1930 and published in 1936, anticipates such conversations by over eighty years. Presented achronologically in seven episodic vignettes set variously between 1895 and 1931, the play dramatizes the destructive manner in which ahistorical, racialized discourses of blood organize how Cherokees relate—or, more often than not, fail to relate—to one another. As the final curtain falls, generations are at an impasse; youth are lost, alienated, and confused; friends have fatally betrayed friends; families are torn apart; and violence and trauma are pervasive components of everyday life. Reflecting what Elizabeth Cook-Lynn decries as the "deficit model" of contemporary Indian life, *The Cherokee Night* seems inextricably at odds with the kinds of strong, communitistic narratives of survivance and renewal that contemporary Native Studies scholars prefer.

Due to the overwhelming sense of determinism which structures all of the conflicts in the play, critics have been unable to reach a consensus regarding precisely what Riggs is saying about Cherokee peoples and the possibilities for productive Cherokee futures. Less generous readings of the play argue that it uncritically recuperates the violence and dispossession embedded in conventional declension narratives of Native absence. Juliette Little Thunder, for instance, condemns its perpetuation of stereotype and Indian blood lust[2] while Craig Womack reads it as a conflicted deferral to a heteronormative and settler-colonial status quo.[3] More sympathetic readers acknowledge the play's significance to Native artistic and intellectual traditions, but disagree widely (and wildly) over the play's critical stance toward blood discourse and the politics of recognition and belonging. Where Jaye Darby,[4] Qwo-Li Driskill,[5] and Christy Stanlake[6] read the play as a decolonizing reclamation of place and traditional cultural practices and beliefs, others such as Jace Weaver[7] and Daniel Justice[8] lament what they read as its failed vision of productive Cherokee relationships or a viable future for a Cherokee national community.

Ultimately, each of these readings express critical anxieties concerning Riggs's deployment of stereotype, declension, tradition, and blood discourse. In attempting to come to terms with the political implications of such questions, critics have left largely unexamined what I would like to suggest is a crucial interpretive aesthetic of the play: its achronological structure.[9] As Robert Dale Parker convincingly reminds us, aesthetic choices are always political—which is to say that both form and convention are

thoroughly implicated in the material histories and contested politics out of which they emerge.[10] *The Cherokee Night's* disruption of linear time is a window into the aesthetic politics, or politics of aesthetics, at work in the play. Specifically, Riggs's achronological dramatic narrative explicitly denies the inevitability and overwhelming sense of doom that runs as a thread throughout the play.[11] Framed by a brief biographical sketch in which I situate Riggs within Cherokee history, American drama in the early twentieth century, and his own critical commentaries on the theater as a site for social critique and transformation, I offer a nationalist reading of *The Cherokee Night* as a profound rejection of blood discourse and a call for Cherokee peoples to fully acknowledge, claim, and take ownership of our own complex, often violent and at times discriminatory history.[12]

Cherokee Roots and Modernist Migrations

Lynn Riggs was born into the Cherokee Nation on August 31, 1899 to Rose Ella Buster Gillis and William Grant Riggs in the small community of Sahgeeyah, just outside of Claremore, Cherokee Nation, Indian Territory. His mother was a Cherokee citizen on her mother's side and his father was a prominent cattle rancher, banker and businessman naturalized into the Nation as an intermarried white citizen. Three months after Riggs's second birthday, Rose died of typhoid fever, and his father remarried another Cherokee woman with whom Riggs had a contentious relationship. A year before Rose passed, however, she enrolled herself and each of her three children as “Cherokees by blood” on

the Dawes rolls under the auspices of the General Allotment Act of 1887 and the Curtis Act of 1898. Rose's decision to enroll herself and her children would prove crucial to Riggs's development as writer, for, in addition to monies earned as a cowpuncher, delivery boy, journalist, and copy editor in cities like Chicago, New York and Los Angeles, Riggs would later use the mortgage of his allotment of eighty acres to fund his education at the University of Oklahoma. In fact, after graduating from the Oklahoma Military Academy, now known as Rogers State University, in Claremore, Riggs enrolled in the English department at OU in 1920, where he would gain notice as poetry editor of *The University of Oklahoma Magazine*, a member of the Blue Pencil literary club, a tenor in the "Sooner Singers," a member of Pi Kappa Alpha fraternity, and a frequent contributor to local theatrical productions as both a writer and an actor.

Struggling with poor health and depression, Riggs relocated to Santa Fe, New Mexico in 1923 where he became acquainted to an avant-garde literary and artistic circle which included D. H. and Frieda Lawrence, Alice Corbin Henderson, Carl Sandburg, Sinclair Lewis, Mary Hunter Austin and Mabel Dodge Luhan, among others. Having formed lifelong relationships with some of the most influential figures in early twentieth century American experimental drama—including Ida Raugh Eastman and Susan Glaspell, co-founders of the Provincetown Players, and George Auerbach, director for the American Laboratory Theatre—Riggs left Santa Fe for Chicago before settling in New York in 1927. It was while on a Guggenheim fellowship in France between 1928 and 1929 that he conceived and penned both *Green Grow the Lilacs* and *The Cherokee Night*,

companion plays about Oklahoma statehood which would bring Riggs widespread acclaim as an immensely talented poet-playwright, regionalist and experimentalist.[13] Indeed, *Green Grow the Lilacs* narrowly missed winning the Pulitzer Prize for drama, finishing second to Glaspell's biographical treatment of Emily Dickinson entitled *Allison's House*. Over the next fifteen years, splitting time between New York, Hollywood, Santa Fe and Mexico, Riggs produced sixteen full-length plays, two one-acts, a number of film scripts and television vehicles, and a collection of published poetry, the *Iron Dish* (1930).[14]

His dramatic prospects on Broadway declined by 1941, and Riggs accepted an appointment as Rockefeller Professor at Baylor University in Waco, Texas where he directed a production of *Macbeth* and his own play *Borned in Texas* (aka *Roadside*).[15] When his semester was up, he was drafted into the Army, serving the majority of his term in the 846 Signal Service Photo Battalion. Upon completing his service commitment, Riggs continued to work for the Office of War Information during which time he wrote a thinly veiled theatrical critique of war and US imperialism entitled *Dark Encounter*. With royalties from the huge success of Rogers' and Hammerstein's adaptation of *GGtL* as *Oklahoma!* providing Riggs with the financial security he long desired, he purchased a farm on the tip of Long Island in 1947 where he remained for the rest of his life and penned the last of his great Oklahoma plays, *All the Way Home* and *Out of Dust*. He completed his final play in 1951, a historical pageant celebrating the 125th anniversary of Western Reserve University that celebrates the role of University founders as committed

abolitionists. Like both Oskison and Eaton, Riggs spent his final years revising scripts for publication, working on an unpublished novel, and composing another collection of poetry, also unpublished at the time of his death. Eventually succumbing to a long-term battle with stomach cancer, he passed away at Memorial Hospital in New York City on June 30, 1954 just shy of his fifty-fifth birthday.

Riggs's theatrical career (1929-1954) emerges out of and spans what many theater historians consider one of the most artistically innovative and politically active eras in American drama. It was also dislocating and chaotic at home and abroad. If the mass destruction and loss of life of World War I rocked the West's confidence in scientific discovery, technological innovation and social evolution, the Bolshevik Revolution threatened the presumed triumph of capitalism by demonstrating the revolutionary potential of class warfare upon an emerging, exploitative US industrial and mass consumer economy. Increased immigration from eastern Europe and Asia in previous decades, fueled by economic and natural disasters abroad and economic opportunity at home, further complicated an already complex and contentious debate over US national identity. Together, such events inspired the Red Scare hysteria of the Hoover administration, reactionary backlash against both labor organizations and leftist art movements, and the nativist policies of the Immigration and Indian Citizenship Acts of 1924. On the home front, reaction against Prohibition seriously challenged the presumed authority of Congress to legislate morality and exposed its inability to police and enforce unpopular legislation. Similarly, the Women's Suffrage Act of 1920 upset conventional

political allegiances and laid the groundwork for a reevaluation of gender relationships and the presumed authority of conventional morality. The stock market crash of 1929 and the decade-long Depression that ensued not only dismantled the wealth and excess of the Jazz Age but also much of the values, assumptions, and beliefs many thought responsible for the political and economic ascendancy of the US and central to American national character itself.

Out of this environment of instability, alienation and confusion emerged some of the most influential and innovative figures of the modern American stage. Viewed by one critic as "an aesthetic response to the very real fears and anxieties attending historical modernity," particularly a perceived crisis of self-representation and self-expression, American dramatic modernism was marked by an intense exploration of the relationship between aesthetic innovation and social engagement (Walker 6, 113). In the late teens and early twenties, the Provincetown Players and Washington Square Players rebelled against what they viewed as the stale commercialism and aesthetic bankruptcy of Broadway and in doing so ushered in the Little Theatre movement which quickly spread across the nation. Producing minimalist, innovative, socially-engaged dramas by young American playwrights like Eugene O'Neill and Susan Glaspell, the Players encouraged writers to experiment not only with form (expressionism, symbolism) but also content (working class plotlines, vernacular speech, social critique) and stagecraft. Three years after the Players premiered O'Neill's expressionist experiment *Emperor Jones* to repeatedly sold out audiences, Richard Boleslavsky and Maria Ouspenskaya brought Russian stagecraft

and dramatic method to the American stage, establishing in the American Laboratory Theatre the first comprehensive theatre company replete with a professional school and a systematic acting method and curriculum. Rooted in the Stanislavsky technique, which not only called upon actors to immerse themselves into the emotional lives of their characters but also required extensive training in voice, speech and movement, the A.L.T. brought a systematic professionalism never before seen on the American stage. Its influence resounded in a generation of American theatre heavyweights including Harold Clurman, Lee Strasberg, Cheryl Crawford, Stella Adler, Sanford Meisner, and Elia Kazan to name but a few. Influenced by the A.L.T.'s professionalization of the New York stage and the more radical agit-prop and socially-directed drama emerging out of the League of Workers' Theatres, this cadre formed the Group Theatre in 1931, with the imperative to establish a permanent, professional theatre capable of producing socially-engaged, politically-committed drama "reflecting on the life of their times" (Clurman qtd in Smith 9). Building upon the enormous success of their first major playwright, Clifford Odets, the Group remained the most influential independent company until its dissolution with the onset of the second World War.

In addition to having personal and professional relationships with many of these individuals and companies, Riggs was also involved in the foundation of two radical theatre groups which pushed social and artistic boundaries of those established even by the Group.[16] The Theatre Union, a non-profit consortium of leftist writers, actors, directors and producers that included Jon Dos Passos, Maxwell Anderson, Sherwood

Anderson, and Stephen Vincent Benet, was formed in 1933 with an express mandate to produce affordable, accessible theatre to proletarian (and later liberal and leftist bourgeois) audiences that might effectively speak to their experiences, expose exploitative social conditions, and agitate revolutionary foment and social change.[17] Influenced by Leninist-Marxist theory and agit-prop socialist theater, the group forwarded an explicitly leftist artistic and political program—revolutionary realism—that acknowledged the influence of social, economic, and historical determinants on human action but emphasized human agency and the potential for revolutionary social change by enlightened, politicized audiences.[18] In this sense, it was, like its Soviet counterpart, Socialist Realism, fundamentally heroic and optimistic. As Ira Levine writes:

> Imbued with this notion, revolutionary realism depicted [common] characters who, through the application of their reason and their collective will to the environment, actively changed their destiny. The new drama … portrayed man not as the world's victim, his will enervated, but as the proud possessor of an active and potent will that could transform society. (112)

Thus, while the "new drama" as practiced by the Theater Union and others depicted social determinism at work, it was not a rigid, nihilistic status quo acting upon unwitting human subjects. Rather, determinism was understood as a historically-situated web of social conditions subject to human action by identifiable characters with whom audiences

could sympathize and for whom they would ostensibly translate emotional sympathy—Aristotle's catharsis— into direct political action.[19]

Similarly political but with a more optimistic critical focus than the Theatre Union, The Vine Theatre sought to create drama that was at once artistically innovative and intellectually complex yet capable of reaching working class audiences and speaking to the truth of their experiences. Conceived by Riggs and the Mexican artist, poet, and playwright Enrique Gasque (aka Ramon Naya), who was also Riggs's long time romantic and professional partner, the Vine was to be the antithesis of Broadway overproduction and banal Hollywood escapism. In a letter to Group Theatre associate Paul Green, Riggs envisions the Vine not as a venue for entertainment or moral didacticism, but a freely creative, "revolutionary" space in which all involved would engage the "vital experience of life" through a shared, imaginative, theatrical experience. Rejecting sectarian and confrontational paradigms of social drama, the Vine sought instead to "fix and comprehend the world and its forces" by emphasizing "the affirmative principles of goodness and truth" both in the creative process and in the architecture of the theater itself. In addition to Green's enthusiastic reception, Riggs's and Gasque's project also attracted the attention of contemporaries Mary Hunter and Russian actor and playwright Andrius Jilinsky. Together, they envisioned a "more free theatre" capable of resisting the restrictive, commodifying forces of the Broadway establishment that Riggs believed stifled creativity and innovation.[20]

Though neither the Theatre Union nor the Vine developed the kind of influence they respectively set out to achieve, their existence expresses an anxiety not only over the continued social significance of theatre, but also over the ethical responsibility of the arts to critically engage social conditions.[21] It was precisely in this volatile yet innovative and energetic theatrical environment that Riggs came of age as a dramatist.

Theatre as Site of Social Transformation

Often at the center of these conversations as a dramatist, critic, and theorist, Lynn Riggs developed over the course of his life a theory of theater which attempted to balance a commitment to artistic innovation and intellectual rigor with the ethical responsibility to use the form as a medium for social critique and a vehicle for social transformation. Responding to a query from the *Southwest Review* in March of 1929 concerning his focus on Oklahoma subject matter, Riggs admits that much of his writing is influenced by the peoples and scenes of his youth. In a profound commentary on issues of race, class, and privilege, Riggs writes:

> But it so happens that I knew mostly the dark ones, the unprivileged ones, the ones with the most desolate fields, the most dismal skies. And so it isn't surprising that my plays concern themselves with poor farmers, forlorn wives, tortured youth, plow hands, peddlers, criminals, slaves – with all the range of folk victimized by brutality, ignorance, superstition, and dread. And will it sound like an affectation (it most surely is not) if I

> say that *I wanted to give voice and a dignified existence to people who found themselves, most pitiably, without a voice, when there was so much be cried out against*? (qtd. in Braunlich 82, emphasis added)

Riggs expands on this early vision of the theater as a medium through which to give voice to the voiceless in a 1932 radio interview, in which he argues that the "American stage must become a platform for fervor, for eloquence, for a blinding revelation of man … It must be more than entertainment, more than life, more than ritual, more than color and glamour. It must touch and illumine the spirit of striving man. It must believe in the word – which is God. That's the theatre I believe in. That's the theatre I intend to spend my life in" ("Poetry" 7). For Riggs, the central purpose of drama is not to serve as a vehicle for escape or as popular entertainment; he argues rather that drama should "make people examine the world we are living in now" and claims "that unless the drama does something for the soul of man it isn't justifying itself" (qtd. in Braunlich 135, 109). Riggs thus powerfully decries what he viewed as contemporary theater's failure to speak out against jingoistic nationalism, patriotic fervor, and other forms of social oppression evident both in the US and across the world.

While Riggs viewed the theater as a vehicle through which to present society with an honest, critical version of itself, he also mandated that it not stop at critique. Good theater—socially-responsible theater—must also challenge audiences intellectually and motivate them politically to become agents of social justice and change. Believing that the theater's formal characteristics made it especially suited to fulfill such responsibilities,

Riggs indicted the photographic realism of his time for a failure of imagination and for refusing to adequately engage the "truth" of social conditions. In an essay, "When People Say 'Folk Drama'" in the *Little Theatre Dallas Magazine* from March of 1932, Riggs argues that "too much realism gets in the way of a play. That is, too much photographic realism. Nearly all my plays, by intention, have a slight edge beyond realism. In other words, the little lying thing beyond realism makes them important to me. Perhaps that's what Art is—a subtle lie, for the sake of telling the truth" (12). Noting a distinction between the "facts" of events themselves and the "truth" which emerges by narrating those events, Riggs contends that "[r]ealistic truth is not real enough, certainly not good enough. A realer truth has to be uncovered. I don't think I should like a play if at some time the drama didn't just walk right out of realism on to a more illuminating and wiser plane" (12). The point, then, was not simply to give voice to the voiceless, but to expose his relatively privileged audiences with an uncompromisingly raw image not of its ideal self, but of its underbelly through the lives, experiences, and conditions of those living on the social and economic margins of American society. Playwrights were thus not simply to present the world descriptively as it is assumed to be or as it presumably must or will be, but to confront conditions honestly in order to imagine everything it might, or could, be in the future.[22]

Riggs sharpened this position in a 1937 *San Francisco Chronicle* commentary on the ethical and social responsibilities of theater, writing that the "theater is an excellent medium through which to attack or embrace the world. Any play which makes no attempt

to realize this function is bad. *It is intellectually shoddy to use the theater for entertainment alone*" (qtd. in Braunlich 151, emphases added). Speaking specifically of playwrights' relationships with their audiences in an address to the San Diego Community Theatre three years later, Riggs charges that playwrights "certainly have no right to ask anyone to sit through one of your productions and to go out without being in some way *changed*" ("Some Notes" 3). If socially-conscious theater has done its job,

> we [will] have had an experience that has reached us, and we are never quite the same again. *Even more so – and more often, we should see those moments on the stage*. We – as theatre people – *should make those moments happen*, or consider ourselves failing in our craft [...]. *This is the theatre – not life*. It is larger and more significant than life. It is a compression and yet a heightening of life. It is a revelation of the symbolic and overwhelming beauty and mystery of moments caught and held and illumined. (4, emphases added)

Riggs connects personal revelation to social action in order to drive his final point home: "The more we seek to know and to comprehend, then *to add what we can to make it more bearable for ourselves and others to live* – the more revelation we can stumble on, and the more we have in our hands the power to change that world. (Even a cell at a time.)" ("Some Notes" 6). Rejecting any notion that what happens in the auditorium should stay in the auditorium, Riggs desired that audiences would translate individual revelation into radical efforts toward social justice.[23]

Hardly a resigned concession to the exigencies of his contemporary moment, Riggs's reflections on theater reveal a profound faith in the power of the arts to effect positive change in the world, and a commitment to produce socially- and politically-engaged theater capable of illuminating, intervening in, and transforming social circumstances. For Riggs, then, theater was neither entirely pedagogical nor exclusively pleasurable; its mission was not simply to teach and delight. Rather, the kind of politically-committed, socially-engaged theater Riggs theorized and wrote was pedagogy-as-praxis, its mission to teach, delight, and transform. This was the kind of drama Riggs spent his entire theatrical life trying to compose, and it is within Riggs's own critical framework that I now turn to *The Cherokee Night*, the play Riggs long considered his most important artistic and intellectual achievement.

Blood, Generation, and Declension

The Cherokee Night opens with a group of Cherokee young adults picnicking on a landing below Claremore Mound in the Oklahoma summer dusk of 1915, nine years after the unilateral federal dissolution of Indian governance in 1906 under the auspices of the Dawes and Curtis Acts that prepared the way for Oklahoma statehood a year later. Nineteen-fifteen also marks the year after hostilities erupted in Europe initiating what would erroneously be termed "the war to end all wars." The juxtaposition of the two events, made explicit in the relationship between returning Cherokee and Osage veterans Hutch Moree and Clabe Whiteturkey in scene six, suggests a correlation: just as the Great War was devastating to Western nations, resulting in the indescribable loss of a

generation of young men, so were federal Indian policies of extermination, assimilation, and allotment catastrophic for Indian peoples. In much the same way that American GIs, including an unprecedented number of Native soldiers, defended US interests by responding to acts of war on foreign soils, so the play suggests American Indians defend their own homelands and nations against acts of war perpetrated by the very body charged with their trust and protection: the federal government. In the political economy of *The Cherokee Night*, Oklahoma statehood was as much an act of war and an assault on the basic principles of sovereignty as was the German invasion of France.

While these larger historical contexts operate upon each of the major characters in the play, Riggs localizes the social conflicts resulting from imperial histories of violence through the symbolic presence of Claremore Mound as a haunting, almost ghost-like apparition present throughout the play. Home to an Osage community with roots antedating the arrivals of southeastern Native peoples to the region, the mound was the site of a brutal massacre perpetrated by Old Settler Cherokees against Osage women, children, and elders. The conflict, largely the result of removal policies of the nineteenth century which forced Indian peoples into territorial conflict over ever-shrinking lands and resources, serves as the central historical mooring of the play, pointing at once to the event, the site on which it took place, and the historical forces ultimately responsible for engendering the conflict in the first place. Claremore Mound stands, then, as a powerful, symbolic reminder of both white-on-Indian violence perpetrated through federal Indian

policy, and the Indian-on-Indian violence which so often emerged as a consequence of those policies.

In order to demonstrate the effects of such intersecting histories on the Cherokee Nation, Riggs presents a set of characters divided by race, class, cultural heritage and attitudes toward modernity, all of which are thoroughly mediated through complex, racially-coded discourses of blood.[24] Where blood signifies an ideology of cultural authenticity and racial purity that sets older and younger generations of Cherokees in irrevocable opposition in scene one (set in 1915), it stands in scene two (1927) as a biological determinant of mixed-blood "deviance" that erodes productive gender relationships between Cherokee men and women. In contrast, blood functions in scene three (1931) as a code for Indian poverty and cultural backwardness that undermines matrilineal relations between Cherokee sisters and nieces. Scenes four (1906), five (1913), and six (1919) examine how blood discourse frustrates interracial and intertribal relationships with other "outcasts" from prevailing US social and political orders—African Americans, Osages, and religious separatists—in terms of a debilitating suspicion, paranoia and fear of racial Otherness. Combined with the pervasive sense of declension, death and doom with which the play ends—confirmed in the final scene in the violent death of a Cherokee man, the fracturing of multiple families, and the nihilistic pronouncements of a Cherokee elder—reading the play as anything but another deterministic story of Native absence and a foreclosure on a productive, Cherokee future

becomes difficult at best. As the final curtain falls, it would appear that night has indeed fallen on the Cherokee people.

Had Riggs written a linear drama, such readings would hold merit. The story would proceed from an elder Cherokee traditionalist's cabin on the eve of allotment and statehood in 1895 through the next forty years providing audiences and readers with glimpses into the gradual erosion of Cherokee families and communities. The murder of a young Cherokee man, dissolution of Cherokee families and incursion by white legal authorities into Cherokee domestic spaces would stand symbolically as local expressions of tribal-national dissolution and the imposition of white social and political authority over Cherokee peoples and territories consequent with statehood. Civilization would finally trump savagery in the Territory, as it inevitably must, a fact confirmed in subsequent scenes dramatizing the complete and utter breakdown of Cherokee social and political structures. Impotent to stop the mighty pulverizing engine of Manifest Destiny, the final blow would come not from military removals, court decisions, or legislative fiats, but from a self-inflicted wound delivered through the pervasive and overwhelmingly divisive influence of blood discourse which frustrates recognition and reconciliation at every turn. Overdetermined by this by-product of colonial violence, the destruction of Cherokee relationships is rendered as a historical inevitability as Cherokee characters assuming their preordained roles as vanishing peoples in the cosmic march of civilization and progress. Once unleashed and set in motion, blood discourse guarantees

what military campaigns and forced civilization policies could not accomplish: the suicidal end of Native communities.

Thankfully, Riggs didn't write a linear narrative of Cherokee decline. As the schematic below attests, *The Cherokee Night* dispenses with the linearity of historical time for a dramatic experience that moves back and forth through time. Indeed, resistance to primal destinies or ideological teleologies of any kind is deeply embedded in the structure of the play itself:

> Scene 1: Sixty-seven Arrowheads. Claremore Mound, Dusk. 1915.
>
> Scene 2: The Hatchet, Rogers County Jail. Spring Night. 1927.
>
> Scene 3: Liniment, A room. Spring morning. 1931
>
> Scene 4: The Place Where the Nigger was Found. The woods near Claremore. Summer afternoon. 1906.
>
> Scene 5: The High Mountain, Church near Tahlequah. Noon, summer. 1913.
>
> Scene 6: The White Turkey. A Farmhouse. An autumn morning. 1919.
>
> Scene 7: The Cherokee Night. A log cabin. Winter night. 1895.

If, as James Cox argues, one identifying attribute of colonialist narratives of Native absence is a pervading drive toward the inexorable vanishing of Native peoples, then we must account for Riggs's rejection of the linear histories upon which such narratives depend as an inadequate paradigm through which to dramatize his critical exploration of Cherokee relationships.[25] *The Cherokee Night* is not a story that moves from Cherokee

autonomy toward the preordained and inevitable moment of national dissolution and cultural decline via the juggernaut of blood discourse. Rather, it is a story about the power of discourse itself to undo families, destroy communities, and undermine reconciliation and renewal by occluding historically-informed, critical understandings of social location that make such efforts possible.[26] By disrupting the deterministic inevitability of manifest manners, the play recasts the familial conflicts and social ruptures it dramatizes as historically-situated social phenomena amenable to revision and change.

One key to making this relationship explicit is to examine the numerous yet fleeting instances that Riggs opens up for Cherokee characters to recognize and claim one another as kith and kin outside of blood discourses. While an entire monograph could be written that closely analyzes the play's engagement with the various manifestations of blood discourse outlined above, I am here interested in three scenes which I believe capture the larger relationships between history, narrative, race, and nation that make visible the disabling cultural work of blood discourse to obfuscate those relationships.

The first such opportunity for mutual recognition occurs in the first scene with the appearance of Old Man Talbert, a Cherokee elder of ambiguous blood heritage who holds blood quantum as a romantic signifier of Cherokee cultural authenticity and national identity. Often hostile to younger generations, he is variously characterized by younger Cherokee characters as “that Old Indian – kinda crazy,” a “Pore old man. Crazy’s a loon,” and a “half-witted old ghoul” (122, 124, 125). Viewing the old man as a potentially

murderous threat—not unjustified considering the violent and hateful invective he levies against them from the moment he walks on stage—most of the kids align themselves in opposition to him, categorically rejecting both the man and his message as threatening, if not insane. In a particularly violent moment, Art Osburn, a character who years later in scene two is charged with and will be convicted for killing his Indian wife, threatens to "crack his head open" with a rock if Talbert makes a threatening move, an assault which the others gradually begin to endorse as tension between the young adults and Talbert reaches a crescendo (124). Only Gar and Bee, half-siblings and characters with the most Cherokee blood, attempt to establish a respectful connection with the old man:

> GAR (*Interfering.*) Let him alone, Art. (*He turns to the OLD MAN.*) Mr. Talbert. Mr. Talbert, don't you know me?
>
> TALBERT (*Fiercely.*) Git on away from here!
>
> GAR. I'm Gar Breeden. You ort to recollect me.
>
> TALBERT. Never seen you before!
>
> GAR. Why, I've come on up on picnics here at Claremore Mound ever since I was knee-high. Gar Breeden. You know *me*. Once I ask at yore house for water, and you give me a drink from the well, years ago. And you give me sump'n else, too. (*He pauses, as if at a troubled ecstatic memory.*) You give me a eagle feather. Don't you remember? … I kep' it. (124)

Gar's attempt to claim Talbert as a member of his community contrasts dramatically with Art's violent repudiation of the experiential authority of elders. Influenced by his past experiences and interactions with Talbert on this very spot, Gar sees the old man not as a menace, but as a respected elder who affirmed significant kinship obligations by providing him with physical and spiritual nourishment. In doing so, Talbert legitimizes Gar's place in Cherokee community in ways that circumvent and subvert legal articulations of legitimacy and belonging. Gar is, after all, an orphan child of the murderous mixed-blood Cherokee outlaw, Edgar Spench. Consistent with the values of reciprocity upon which kinship obligations depend, Gar attempts to act in kind. Unfortunately, Talbert is unable to accept Gar's offering. Though he admits recognition—"I know you all! Everyone of you. Knowed you all yer lives, the whole goddamn crew of you!" (125)—Talbert sees not fellow Cherokees, but a useless, lost, and corrupt generation of mixed-blood miscreants: "I seen too much of you, anyway! Clutter up the world – all of you – that's whut you do! Good fer nothin' … You're no use to anybody. You're lost. *You might as well be dead*" (125, emphasis added).

Talbert's notions of racial purity and cultural authenticity, interpreted and articulated as they are through the romanticized conflation of blood quantum and cultural purity, are most evident in his apocalyptic message of cultural degradation and loss. Ten years earlier, while napping at Claremore Mound, Talbert experienced a vision of the Cherokee-Osage massacre:

> The Cherokees! Painted for war! A-stealin' up on the Osages asleep up

> there by their campfires! (*Savagely, with frightful passion*.) Fall on 'em, cut their th'oats, bury their tomahawks in their thick skulls, let yer muskets thunder! At every Cherokee belt a row of Osage scalps – with long black hair swishin' and drippin'! I seen it – all of it – *my people!* I heared the Osage groans! (126)

Talbert's observation of the violence and bloodshed of the event is both vivid and, by most accounts, accurate. With federal consent, ostensibly to counteract unprovoked hostilities by the savage Osages against peaceful, civilized Cherokee settlers, Cherokees launched a series of attacks against Osage settlements between 1817 and 1818. Acting on intelligence that Osage warriors under the leadership of Gleh-Mo'n (Claremont) were away on a hunt, a party of between five and eight hundred Cherokees, as well as other Indian and some white allies, descended upon the settlement below Claremore Mound. Within minutes, the party had massacred anywhere from thirty eight to eighty four men and women, many of them elderly, and took over one hundred Osage children as captives and payment for allied participants in the attack. After a series of retaliations and reprisals over the next year, both parties agreed to peace in the Treaty of 1818, in which Osages ceded a vast section of land between the Neosho and Verdigris rivers and guaranteed Cherokees an outlet to the rich Kansas hunting grounds in exchange for the return of prisoners and a cessation of violence. Hostilities nevertheless continued throughout the 1820s and 30s as more and more eastern Indians were removed to Indian Territory. Plagued by hunger, dwindling territory, decreasing access to game, demographic

pressures, and intensified internal dissension, the Osages, unable to find an advocate in the Territory or in Congress, were forced into the Treaty of 1839 in which they ceded the remaineder of their lands in Indian Territory and were forcibly removed to a small reservation in Kansas. With this final cession, US removal policy in the Southeast cleared its final hurdle, as both removal advocates and eastern Indians forcibly removed were now free to settle the land as they saw fit.[27]

This conflict was popularly depicted by removal and civilization advocates as well as some Old Settler Cherokees as an epic struggle between the "civilized" Cherokees and "savage" Osages. Though highly attuned to the racial politics of such policies and the extent to which they often intentionally encouraged conflict between Indian peoples either to facilitate removal or to gain access to Indian lands, both Cherokees and Osages were forced to negotiate the savage/civilized discourse through which such policies were articulated. Possessing a greater familiarity and longer history with US cultural mores and legalese, Cherokees often positioned themselves as helpless victims of Osage savagery, rather than unwelcome immigrants into Osage territory with their own political interests in gaining access to rich Osage lands. Playing upon the cultural chauvinism of "civilized" Americans and their fear and disdain of Indian savages, Cherokees parlayed their reputation as "civilized" Indians to gain support for the expulsion of their Osage antagonists and consolidate their own hegemony in the region.

It is precisely Talbert's ignorance of the policy decisions and historical events that placed Osages and Cherokees into violent conflict over territory and resources which

prevents him from reading the event as anything but a romantic epic of Cherokee heroism, the last great gasp of a Cherokee warrior ethic: "Now you've saw, you've been showed. *Us* – The Cherokees – in our full pride, our last glory! This is the way we are, the way we was meant to be" (127). Taking these "*passionate*" sentiments of the bloody warrior at face value, Talbert uncritically adopts the frustrating contradictions embedded in the Noble Savage—at once noble and ignoble, civilized and savage—and holds them up as an exclusive, and therefore by definition divisive, paradigm for an authentic Cherokee identity. Talbert's romantic ideal of Cherokee warrior nobility forecloses the possibility of bringing his apocalyptic vision into the present and making it relevant for any kind of model articulating a viable Cherokee future.[28] In Talbert's racial logic, both racial purity and cultural authenticity are impossible to attain.

From Tecumseh's and Tenskatawa's efforts to unite Native peoples against US aggression in 1811 to the widespread practice of Wovoka's Ghost Dance religion which led, ultimately, to the US massacre of Lakota peoples at Wounded Knee eighty years later, Talbert's vision intersects with a long history of Native prophesies advocating the rejection of white ways and a return to Indigenous cultural practices and beliefs in response to moments of drastic social and cultural upheaval. A Cherokee ghost dance movement emerged, in fact, as a response to a series of catastrophic events between 1811 and 1812 which included the collapse of the fur and pelt trade, famine and natural disasters, US intrusion, and the rising influence of a secular mixed-blood political and economic elite.[29] Rooted in many of the conventions apparent in Talbert's own vision—

the mysterious appearance of Cherokee elders, a qualified rejection of white ways, an admonition to return to traditional practices, and the evocation of the supernatural—the Rocky Mountain Vision differed dramatically in its ultimate goals. Though it "looked backward to a better age when much game was present, old ways were followed, and the Cherokees practiced their dances and rituals in the sacred towns," it also advanced a vision of cultural syncretism that advocated western education and English literacy, a codified system of law, and political alliance with sympathetic whites even as it admonished Cherokees to make no further land cessions and mandated a respectful cultural and political separatism for all peoples (McLoughlin, *Renaissance* 181). Whether effected through peaceful spiritual revival, a return to cultural traditions, apocalyptic military resistance, or a combination of the three, Indigenous millenarian movements sought to establish order and stability in the present, often by reconciling contemporary circumstances with a people's long held understandings of identity and belonging. In doing so, they seek to ensure, or usher in, a regenerative future of prosperity and hope, what Andrew Uzendoski, following Jennifer Wenzel, terms decolonial afterlives.[30]

Talbert's vision diverges dramatically in its foreclosure of transformative possibilities and its failure to provide a coherent, hopeful vision of the future for the people. While castigating the kids for having "forgot" their ancestors and characterizing them as "withered leaves," Talbert's own romanticized notions of Cherokee authenticity and his vexed understanding of history implicates him in his own argument. The absurdity of this situation is rendered even more apparent in Talbert's conclusion that the

only way to re-claim this presumed birthright is to dig up arrowheads—artifacts which stand as symbolic "proof" of Cherokee warrior nobility—and distribute them to the community in hopes of reawakening a romanticized, heroic idea of themselves.[31] While perhaps lost on both Talbert and the others, the ironic pageant of an Indian elder searching for Indian artifacts as a means of claiming an essentialized, idealized birthright from the past, all the while rejecting real-life Cherokee youths in the present who represent the potential future of the Nation, is not lost on readers or audiences.

Talbert's virulent rejection of Gar's offering forecloses any possibility of bridging the generation and cultural gap. Seeing the problem of cultural discontinuity as one inherent to this "lost," "dead" generation of Cherokees, Talbert's vision can only assume the form of an absolute repudiation of the young rather than a potentially nourishing act of generational healing and cultural transformation (125). As such, he becomes the quintessentially self-loathing, internally colonized Indigenous person, a psychological state of being which, in the political economy of *The Cherokee Night*, renders him insane and a social outcast. Because the kids each share a similar disconnect between history and place—for Art, Claremore Mound is nothing more than a local landmark; for Viney Jones, an insignificant curiosity where one might find evidence confirming Oklahoma's "savage" and distant past as Indian Territory—they are unable to identify the ruptures and discontinuities in Talbert's prophesy. Unequipped with a nuanced historical understanding of the material histories that brought them to this site of imperial violence, neither Talbert nor the children are able to see through the discursive haze of blood

discourse which sets them in irrevocable opposition. In exchanging the rights, responsibilities and obligations of kinship for the absolutist binaries of blood purity, Talbert reproduces the very generational divide he laments, ensuring that continuing generational conflict is all but guaranteed.

Race, Violence, and Historical Accountability

If the opening scene of *The Cherokee Night* dramatizes the extent to which a particularly exclusionary articulation of blood purity divides generations of Cherokees, scene four, "Where the Nigger Was Found," implicates the Cherokee Nation in larger imperialist discourses of intra- and inter-racial violence. Strategically situated in the middle of the play, and set in 1906, the year of the final allotment of Cherokee lands and the closing of the Dawes rolls, Riggs presents Hutch Moree, Art and Gar as prepubescent boys—"*ten or twelve years old*" (156)—attempting to find "evidence" of the site where local gossip holds a black man was brutally murdered, presumably by another black man, over a drunken game of cards.[32] As in the first scene, Riggs uses his characters' dialogue and action to examine competing visions about what constitutes notions of family, culture, race, and nation. Unique to this scene, however, is the introduction of blackness into the discussion, a significant addition in this historical setting as in the 1930s Afro-Cherokee citizens and other black residents were actively petitioning the Cherokee and federal governments to deliver on their rights as Cherokee citizens. The stage directions describing the boys' racially-charged state of mind is significant: "*Stalking carefully*

through the woods and into the bright circle of sun, three boys, about ten or twelve years old, come into sight. They are bent and tense, far apart, watchful – as if they expected to come upon some astonishing and fearful thing" (156). As soon becomes apparent, what they fear is blackness itself, whether in the form of whispered suggestions of black kinship or the threat of direct interaction with black male bodies.

Central to the scene is a struggle over narrative authority and the relationship of blackness to Cherokee history. As the scene progresses, more of the story about the murder is revealed; however, nothing about the story the boys cobble together is verifiable, much less authoritative. They each receive threads of it from different sources, the character and content of which are questionable, if not entirely fabricated, and none of which appear to corroborate the others in any meaningful way. Art rejects Hutch's claim to authority based upon Hutch's fraternal relationship to his source, reminding him that he heard the story not from his older brother but from Art. Hutch similarly dismisses Art's authority calling into question the moral character of his informant, Tom Bussey, a fifteen year old vagrant who runs with a local gang best known as community pranksters and minor thieves. At an impasse, both boys remove to their respective corners, each unwilling to cede control of the narrative to the other.

In these opening lines of dialog, Riggs highlights the extent to which each argument is shaped by their understandings of authority and belonging as refracted through blood discourse. Where Hutch and Art appeal to essentialist ties of blood kinship or unquestioned deference to seniority to legitimize their narratives, Gar appeals to a

distinctly anti-essentialist sense of family and community. When challenged, Gar authenticates his narrative, received from his Anglo guardian, Mr. Ferber, by deferring to the reliability of his "Pappy" (158). Both Art and Hutch immediately dismiss Gar's account not because they question Mr. Ferber's reputation or reliability as a narrator, but because he ostensibly has no jurisdiction in the matter as neither blood kin nor a Cherokee citizen. Hutch comments, "A guardeen ain't a pappy … He *ain't* blood kin. He's a Dutchman. A furriner like him!" presumably referring to the black man in question (158). Hutch's conflation of blood, kinship and belonging align with what both Sturm and Garroutte identify as a significant ideological signifier of belonging in Cherokee communities specifically and in Indian communities more generally.[33] Such statements of political jurisdiction—in this case kinship as belonging—in what was still, in 1906, a sovereign Cherokee Nation affirms kinship as a persistent signifier of belonging despite the impending dissolution of the Nation's political and territorial autonomy.

They are also troublingly laced with nationalist racial prejudices that continually frustrate the development of positive intra- and inter-racial/tribal relationships throughout the play. As with his claiming of Old Man Talbert in the first scene, Gar ignores blood as a legitimate identifier of family, culture or community, and claims his "Pappy" as his own based upon Mr. Ferber's kindness, generosity, mentorship and support: "Mr. Ferber is same as my blood kin," Gar asserts, "good as my Pappy was – (*Thoughtfully*.) – better'n my pappy. (*Inside, to himself, turning, facing front*.) He wants me to be smart" (158). For Gar, Mr. Ferber's authority lies in his genuine desire to see Gar live a full and happy life,

despite the painful hand he has been dealt as an orphan and ward of the Nation. [34] Considering the pervasive exploitation and graft that accompanied the practice of guardianship in the decades following allotment, Gar's endorsement of Mr. Ferber's moral character also carries significant political weight. Much like Oskison's endorsement of the Keenes and Dawes as Cherokee nationalist patriots based upon their commitment to Cherokee common property law and legal authority, it is Mr. Ferber's personal commitment to Gar's well being, rather than blood ties or political status, which defines Gar's reciprocal commitment to his "Pappy." In contrast to Talbert's restricted racialized vision, Gar's more culturally- and historically-nuanced reckoning of kinship and belonging focuses less on who or what a person is and more on what and for whom a person does, reflecting an ethic Jace Weaver terms communitism.

While such passages position Gar as the only character in the play that approaches even a quasi-critical attitude toward issues of race, culture, community, and nation as they relate to Cherokee peoplehood, even he is not immune from racist discourses of *black* othering. Having established for himself what constitute legitimate boundaries of authority and belonging, Gar holds his ground, quietly reasserting that the "nigger was kilt here. Mr. Ferber told me. (*He turns his back on them both, solid and final*.)" (158). Gar's easy use of racial epithets makes visible the contradictions inherent to racialized conceptualizations of belonging. Gar objectifies and dehumanizes black bodies while simultaneously struggling to legitimize anti-essentialist ideals of Cherokee belonging. Gar's casual and seemingly unconscious use of such slurs problematically aligns him with

Old Man Talbert's racist and classist comparisons of Cherokee youths with "white trash and black niggers" from scene one (125). Just as racialized discourses of cultural authenticity prevent Talbert from seeing his role in the generational conflict he laments, Gar's deference to racial epithets implicate him in the same "madness" which consumes Talbert. His near murder at the hands of religious zealots for whom he becomes a similarly racialized scapegoat in scene five (1913) and his psychological breakdown and retreat into himself alluded to in scene one two years later attests to the destructive self-loathing and internalized trauma such contradictions engender.

The paranoid fear inspired by the prospect of encountering black otherness is intensified as the boys surrender their "evidentiary" arguments to their racially-charged, overactive imaginations. From questionable footsteps to an empty tin can with traces of whiskey in it to a playing card with a bent edge, everything suddenly confirms the frightening presence of the dead black man. As they freely speculate about the place where he lies, the boys are spooked by a bird flushed from the surrounding cover. Hutch sees a crow, Gar a hawk, and Art a buzzard. A bird that feeds on carrion, a buzzard would signify that death was close by; however, the bird turns out to be a chicken hawk, a revelation that sends Hutch into a "(*crazy, almost hysterical triumph*)" (160). Hutch's intense relief at not having to confront the reality of blackness is short-lived, as Art begins speculating on the possibility of encountering not the dead victim but his living murderer:

ART: (*Absorbed.*) What if he'd come back?

HUTCH: Who?

ART: The nigger that done the killin'. (*He looks round tensely*.) What if he'd be hidin' – here in the bresh some'eres – lookin' at us – right now! What if he'd grab us?

HUTCH: Art!

ART: He *might.* He might kill us!

HUTCH: (*Quickly*.) No, now Art! A man seen him up by Quapaw. The Sheriff's went up there to hunt fer him. Anyway – he'd be skeered to come here – whur – whur that – (*He looks at the heaped leaves*.)

ART: No, he wouldn't. It wouldn't skeer him. Niggers is funny. They got a funny way. When the niggers was run out of Claremore, Pap said a funny thing. When a nigger would get shot, he wouldn't know it. He'd keep on runnin'.

HUTCH: Couldn't he feel it?

ART: (*With curious tensity, crossing way down left on speech*.) I'd a-shot him till he felt it. They was one all covered 'th blood run plumb to Inola. When he got there, he fell over dead. (161)

The imagined possibility of encountering black otherness transforms the murdered black man from a non-threatening, racialized curiosity into the living threat of black violence symbolized in the murderer who is assumed by the boys to be black and who may or may not still be at large. The very presence of blackness itself, and the anxiety it produces,

becomes the fulcrum around which these competing narratives of Cherokee belonging begin to turn.[35]

The boys' fears and anxieties over blackness are rooted in larger national concerns over the contentious place of blackness in Cherokee society dating from at least the early nineteenth century. In fact, debates over slavery, the citizenship status of freedmen, and the residency of free blacks were thoroughly shot through with anxieties over miscegenation, national racial identity, and the balance of political power. Racialized as legal others in the Constitution of 1827, Afro-Cherokees were denied the rights to citizenship, property ownership, education, intermarriage, and, at various moments, legal residence in the Nation. Though the Treaty of 1866 with the federal government following the US Civil War acknowledged that all freedmen and Afro-Cherokees would "enjoy all of the rights and privileges of Native Cherokees," the extent and reach of those rights—particularly as they related to property ownership, allotment, and per capita payments from the sale of national lands—remained in question. While scholars disagree on the motivations and intentions of such laws, all agree that the qualified adoption of western ideas and political structures radically shifted definitions of place and belonging from a flexible system of matrilineal clan relations to an increasingly racialized and hierarchical legal code that naturalized racial difference via the language of citizenship.[36] Consequently, many view the processes by which blackness came to be legally and culturally defined as outside Cherokee national identity as a consequence of the process of nationalization itself.[37] To this point, Sturm writes that "at the center of the story of

Cherokee identity and experience is an absence, an exclusion, a silence where the Cherokee freedmen might have been" (169).

Read in this context, the silences and ruptures embedded in the boys' competing arguments over narrative authority parallel the historical silences fostered by racialized legal codes that positioned blackness in strict opposition to Cherokee and US identity. At issue is not simply historical and narrative injustices perpetrated by one people against another, however. As Tiya Miles argues, larger traumatic implications inhere in the silencing of unspeakable pasts, "For the void that remains when we refuse to speak of the past is in fact a presence, a presence both haunting and destructive" (xvi). The ease with which ten or twelve year old boys perpetuate histories of violence by participating in racist discourses is evidence enough of the "haunting and destructive" influence they exert upon the most vulnerable in society.

Perhaps even more troubling, however, is their failure to recognize their own subjugation to the values and assumptions of ideologies of racial difference. The boys' internalization of black racism, rooted in a complex history of Cherokee-black relations, prevents them from seeing themselves as part of the violent narrative they are attempting to recover. Neither are they capable of fully understanding the blackness they feel increasingly compelled to escape.[38] Art's reference to violent expulsions of blacks, many of whom were likely Afro-descendant Cherokees, from towns in the Cherokee Nation and elsewhere in Indian Territory—interpreted in heroic terms just as Talbert interpreted the

"valor" of the Cherokee-Osage conflict—is the imagined, romanticized "trace" of a real history of Cherokee national violence against black bodies.[39]

Indeed, what was only the trace of the absent presence of blackness in the boys' imaginative reconstruction of racial violence becomes in the final image of the scene the haunting, destructive presence to which Miles alludes, and it is here where Riggs levies one of the play's strongest critiques against blood discourse. As the imaginative intensity of the scene progresses towards the kinds of panic and hysteria that often lead to racial violence, anxiety over potentially finding the *dead* black man is transformed into a paranoid fear of coming face to face with a real-life black male. In his attempt to control this fear by violently rejecting it, Art lashes into one the most troublingly racist tirades in the text:

> 'F *I* found a nigger, I'd hack him!
>
> 'F *I* found a nigger, I'd hack him!
>
> 'F *I* found a nigger, I'd hack him! Hack him! (164)

The other two boys then join in the chant and they begin dancing and whooping in "Indian" fashion to the subtle beat of a drum that has emerged from Claremore Mound in the distance. One of the boys suddenly stops, drops his tin can, bends down and begins "feverishly tearing leaves apart with his hands" (164). As he rises, he turns his hands over to reveal the "palms … streaked with blood" (164). "(*In ecstasy and horror*)," Art screams out, "Got blood on my hands!" and the boys rush off in terror (164). As they exit, the drum stops and the theatre is bathed in silence. As if emerging from the land itself, "*a*

giant NEGRO, *naked to the waist, lifts himself into the sun from behind the thick underbrush*." He stares at the fleeing boys, stretches, and then extends his hands from his waist and returns with a couple of large, overripe blackberries. The scene goes dark. As the lights come up, Claremore Mound is featured prominently in the distance: "*An Indian, slim, aristocratic, minute in the distance, stands up against the sky. A drum is beating – harsh and troubled. It is like a fevered and aching disquiet at the pit of the world*" (165, emphasis added).

While in many ways, the murder serves as pretext for Riggs to engage issues of social legitimacy in the Cherokee Nation, one cannot ignore the symbolic juxtaposition of Claremore Mound with the visible and apparently menacing presence of black bodies. If the first serves as a constant reminder of Indian-on-Indian violence resulting in the consolidation of Cherokee political power in the region—itself a consequence of federal policies of dispossession and relocation—the latter points to the history of racism, slavery, and social marginalization of black peoples in the Cherokee Nation from the early 1820s through the present as a product of Cherokee apporpriations of the US racial order. As in the first scene, these intersecting histories of violence acutely operate on everyone involved at this prominent moment and place of imperial conflict, violence and death. This scene depicts three boys imagining and inventing history as they go—on one hand a history of blackness informed by the troubling presence of Claremore Mound, and, on the other, a history of redness informed by the painful reality of Red-over Black slavery.[40] If nations are consolidated through narratives that render difference absent and

silence dissenting experiences, then Riggs's juxtaposition of black bodies with Claremore Mound must be seen as a dramatic attempt to render visible experiences and events which Cherokee and US nationalist histories seek to obscure if not erase entirely.[41]

The subversive power of the scene, arguably, is the refusal of the black male body to comply with these narratives. By staging such acts and events and making them visibly present on stage, Riggs holds Cherokees accountable for the racial violence—both internal and external—upon which Cherokee national identity in Indian Territory was at least partially built. That such hatred, fear, and racist invective spills from the mouths not of "mad" Indian elders but ten year old boys stands as a powerful statement not of things "carried in the blood," but of attitudes learned and passed down. The scene thus indicts the insidious power of racist discourses to influence even the most vulnerable in society as well as the failure of that society to disrupt cycles of violence and trauma rooted in prejudice, bigotry, and violence. Though the boys flee the scene in terror from what they think is the blood of the murdered black man on *their* hands, the real blood is arguably on the hands of those Cherokees who advocated the adoption of black slavery and on elders like Talbert for failing to prevent young boys from becoming men like them. One is not born with racism, the scene suggests. One learns it.

Surrogate Families, Surrogate Nations

Each of the four scenes not examined here dramatize the traumatic and self-destructive effects on personal and political relationships when ahistorical notions of

blood, culture, and race obfuscate or erase entirely the material and historical events responsible for bringing characters to a given time and place. In the absence of historical explanations for the dissolution of the Nation, Gar's inability to locate himself in productive and healthy ways within Cherokee community leads to his trauma at the hands of the religious fanatics (scene 5), resulting in his withdrawal from college and his eventual psychological retreat into himself. Similarly, Bee Newcomb becomes a sexualized informant for the state against Art. Metaphorically "prostituted" with payment for services rendered (141), instead of claiming Art as her own and working in concert with him, she signs his death sentence and ensures her descent into depression and self-loathing by manipulating him into an admission of guilt for murdering his wife (scene 2).[42] Likewise, Viney Jones's failure to overcome her own internalized class prejudices and racialized self-loathing forces her to repudiate her Cherokee heritage, eviscerating her relationship with her sister Sarah and foreclosing any prospect of a positive relationship with her niece (scene 3). In similar terms, without a concrete understanding of the historical significance of Claremore Mound in Cherokee and Osage histories, Hutch Moree is unable to discern the source of his debilitating deferral to his brother George's anti-Osage Cherokee chauvinism, or to understand his Osage fiancée's own nationalist class prejudice against the "uselessness" of Cherokee "blood" (scene 6). As these synopses suggest, and as the play attests, a character's ignorance of and inability to *fully* claim their history doesn't just simply frustrate opportunities of mutual recognition.

They are, ultimately, *always* destructive and inherently inimical to the overall search in the play for affirmative models of Cherokee relationships outside discourses of blood.

Considering the almost total breakdown of Cherokee social structures dramatized in the previous six scenes, the various acts of recognition and solidarity that occur in the final scene come as somewhat of a shock. As in previous scenes, Riggs presents Cherokees related to one another through bonds of race, culture, kinship and national filiation thrown together in a situation of conflict. Also as in previous scenes, blood discourse structures and informs every aspect of these relationships. The scene opens with a Cherokee elder, Gray Wolf, educating his grandson in family history and oral traditions. This act of passing down generational knowledge is particularly significant in light of his mothers' conspicuous absence and his fathers' recent murder by territorial lawmen under questionable circumstances. They are interrupted when a mixed-blood Cherokee outlaw named Edgar Spench bursts into the cabin seeking refuge from these same territorial authorities on charges of murder. In the moral argument that ensues—which reveals details of Spench's murder of a respected store clerk and his paternal relationships to Gar and Bee—Spench attributes his lawlessness and criminal behavior to his possession of "too much Indian blood," echoing similar sentiments through which Art Osborne understands his own criminality and propensity for violence from scene two. The traditionalist elder Gray Wolf counters that Spench's problem is that he does not possess enough Indian blood, recalling the language of mixed-blood degeneracy propounded by Talbert in scene one. In both arguments, blood stands as an absolute,

mutually exclusive signifier of moral worth. Conditioned by previous action, audiences and readers expect discussion and dialog to break down precisely at this point. The play fails to deliver upon this expectation, however, opening up moments of recognition in which seemingly antagonistic Cherokee characters come to some understanding of themselves and their relationships to one another outside of the racialized determinism and irresolvable contradictions of blood discourse.

This recognition occurs as Spench, in pain, whispers, "The blood –" (206). Gray Wolf immediately stops speaking, approaches Spench and asks, "What is it?" to which Spench answers, "The blood […] *Stop the blood*" (207, emphasis added). Though Spench is speaking now both about the lifeblood running out of his body as well as the racial force in the blood he sees as part of his violent nature, Gray Wolf recognizes something else—perhaps kinship, perhaps a historical connection to Indian blood spilled in Northeastern Oklahoma and across the United States, perhaps the pain and weight of a history of violence, dislocation, and struggle. He immediately dispenses with his moral diatribe against Spench's character and simply attempts to care for the outlaw, repeatedly admonishing him to remain still and encouraging him to "Fight to live!" in spite of Spench's overwhelming will to die (209). As Anglo territorial authorities descend upon Gray Wolf's cabin to bring Spench to justice, erroneously claiming legal jurisidiction in matters between Indians, Spench indicates his weariness of the fight, draws his gun and is killed, his value for the authorities determined only by the reward offered for his capture. In response to Gray Wolf's accusations, "You can't do that, can't do it! In cold blood!"

Sheriff Tinsley informs him of the changing situation in the Territory: “Let this be a lesson and a warnin'. Teach your grandson. Tell everybody what it means to oppose the law. You Indians must think you own things out here. This is God's country out here—and God's a white man. Don't forget that” (209). As Spench's wife, child and pregnant mistress arrive at the cabin, Gray Wolf admonishes the authorities to “Leave us, he's *our* dead,” and the play comes to a somber end (211).

I'd like to tease out the significance of these final acts of recognition and push back against the tragic tone evident even in the stage directions. Unlike Talbert’s rejection of Cherokee youth as a hopelessly corrupted and “lost” generation, Gray Wolf claims Spench as Cherokee despite the “objective” reality of his propensity for violence. Where Viney rejects both Hutch and her sister by evoking racialized notions of class privilege, Gray Wolf ignores the racial, cultural, and even moral differences that separate him from Spench. Rather than collaborate with territorial authorities to apprehend and bring Spench to justice, as Bee does with Art in scene two, Gray Wolf provides shelter and care to someone who, by the absolute standards of legal “justice,” in no way deserves pity. Tinsley’s racist tirade against Indian sovereignty in a year—1895—that Indian Territory was still a political geography of Indian nations, further confirms Gray Wolf’s opposition to territorial law as “just” in its own Cherokee way.[43] Confronted with the very real threat to Cherokee national sovereignty embodied by the incursion of agents of the colonial state into his home, Gray Wolf claims a murderous, lecherous outlaw with whom he shares little more than a political identity as a Cherokee citizen and a common fate under

the racist, anti-Indian ideologies of Manifest Destiny. In this important moment of political awakening, Gray Wolf seems to identify a parallel between Spench's death at the hands of "legal" authorities and the impending "legal" violation of Cherokee sovereignty by the federal government. Considering the massive, post-Civil War effort to bring Indian Territory into the United States territorial system, Gray-Wolf's verbal and physical claiming of Spench and his refusal to recognize the posse's authority on Cherokee national lands represents both an affirmation of Cherokee sovereignty as well as a historically-rooted, experientially-localized conceptualization of Cherokee peoplehood.

Another significant moment of recognition that escapes the legal and moral restrictions of blood discourse emerges with the arrival of Spench's legitimate wife Marthy Breeden, and his pregnant mistress, Florey Newcomb, shortly after Tinsley's authorities have fatally wounded Spench. As they look upon his broken body, Marthy, described in the text as a "*gaunt dark woman"* possessing a "*rich warm, earthy and compassionate power*," contemplates his troubled life:

> They got you. We always knew they would, didn't we? … What you done was what they call wrong. You couldn't help it, I know that. You tried to do right. It was too much. You was hounded day and night, inside and outside. By day, men. At night, your thoughts. Now it's over. Sleep. Rest now. (*She shifts the child in her arms, looks down at it*.) But here's your son. In him your trouble. It goes on. In him. It ain't finished. (*She turns, calls to a young woman, who is weeping quietly. FLOREY comes over to*

> *her*.) Florey. Here's Florey Newcomb, bearin' your child. You're at rest. Sleep. Your disgrace, your wickedness, your pain and trouble live on a while longer. In her child, in my child. In all people born now, about to be born (*Her face becomes luminous, as her mind gropes toward an impersonal truth*.) Someday, the agony will end. Yours has. Ours will. Maybe not in the night of death, the cold dark night, without stars. Maybe in the sun. It's got to! It's what we live for. (210)

As I read this passage, Marthy performs two remarkable acts. First, she calls out to Florey and recognizes her not as a harlot or home-wrecker, as conventional Christian monogamous values might demand, but rather as a kindred spirit grieving over the loss of the man they both deeply loved and who is thus deserving of her sympathy and respect. This act of female solidarity contrasts the erosion of matrilineal relationships illustrated in the play's third scene.

Set in 1931, the latest in historical time, "A Liniment Room" depicts the collapse of relations between Viney Jones and her sister Sarah. Mirroring the racial binary through which Gray Wolf and Spench initially relate, blood functions for Sarah as a source of ethnic pride connecting her deeply to her maternal culture, while for Viney it stands as a racialized signifier of poverty, ignorance, and savagery. Their relationship is thoroughly mediated by self-loathing, and Viney's unannounced visit to their mother's home where Sarah and Maisie now reside predictably implodes over issues of identity, culture and class. As Sarah indicts Viney's "failure" to abide by the humble values and kinship

obligations their mother taught them, Viney counters that her material comfort, wealth, and clear moral conscience is the only measure of success she needs. As she storms out the door and the lights fade, a family has been torn apart, a matrilineal relationship is eviscerated and the obligations of a Cherokee aunt to her niece go unfulfilled. Considering the centrality of matrilineal relations to Cherokee cultural and political identity, such disidentifications signal profound, and in this scene irrevocable, disruptions to traditional notions of identity and community belonging rooted in productive, indeed sacred, relationships between women. Where scene three seems to close the door on such relationships, the final scene reopens that possibility. Circumventing conventional social mores and legal understandings of family, legitimacy and community, Marthy's claiming of Florey and her unborn child as kith, if not as kin, carves out a "legitimate" space for them within their immediate community in much the same way that Talbert's earlier acts of kindness to Gar legitimized his place in community despite Gar's position as orphan child of a murderous outlaw.

In addition to privileging female lived experience over legal abstractions of legitimacy and belonging, Marthy's comments also suggests a more complicated understanding of "blood" based less in biology than ideology and shared social location. While this passage echoes the familiar fatalistic despondence of blood discourse, her words take on an ironic meaning when read in the context of similar statements from previous scenes. Absent from her account, for instance, is the racialized moral absolutism evident in both Gray Wolf's early didacticism and Tinsley's narrative of Anglo

triumphalism. Marthy's location of Spench's "crimes" as explicitly within a contested moral universe—"What *you* done was what *they* call wrong"—pierces into the moral relativism and cultural chauvinism through which "outlaws" like Spench are positioned as scapegoats in arguments over racial/cultural supremacy, whether by white racists or fellow Cherokees. Such a distinction suggests that it is not literally Spench's mixed blood that determines his behavior and violent end, but the way in which "blood" itself is constructed, understood and experienced within discourses that conflate race, morality, and progress. Marthy's seemingly despondent vision that her son and Florey's unborn child might suffer similarly violent lives reads less as a statement of determinism than a critique of the violence and trauma attending social conflicts born of race-based thinking. From this more ironic perspective, the "disgrace," "wickedness," "pain," and "trouble" that defined Spench's life reach well beyond Spench, Gray-Wolf's cabin, or even Indian Territory to "all people born now, about to be born." Whether in Talbert's romantic ideas of cultural purity, Viney's racialized class prejudice, adolescent paranoia of black alterity, or Sheriff Tinsley's white supremacism, the schizophrenic "madness" that consumes Spench is here shared by all whose lives it touches. Collapsed and embodied in the needless death of a Cherokee man, the "agony" of "blood" and the question of how to stop it is not an "Indian problem," but a crisis experienced and a responsibility shared by every character in the play.

Marthy's wish that "the agony will end" reflects an optimism that discourses of cultural purity and racial determinism explicitly foreclose. One cannot, after all, change

“essential” characteristics. If Spench's children share his blood, and it is his blood that determines his fate, then his children are by definition condemned to share similarly violent ends. They have no choice in the matter. Marthy doesn't subscribe to this determinism, however. Countering Florey's nihilistic lament that “it goes on, it goes on!” Marthy replies, “In our children, yes, In our children's children, maybe no” (210). Though she acknowledges that their children might well be subject to the violence that defined their father's life, she also imagines a possibility that Spench could not and that Tinsley's narrative of racial triumphalism explicitly denies: the end of blood. Marthy's carefully optimistic vision of the future in the final scene of the play thus stands in stark contrast to Talbert's rejection of the very generation she refers to with which the play opens. Together with Gray Wolf's claiming of Spench as “our dead,” Marthy's sympathy toward Florey and her measured optimism suggest radically different ideas of community and relationships than any of the preceding scenes.

To argue that Riggs subverts some of the divisive elements at work earlier in the play is far different from arguing that the play is entirely subversive or that it successfully puts forward a healthy idea of Cherokee communities, Cherokee nationhood, or Indian sovereignty. At the end of the day, Spench dies; both Florey and Marthy acknowledge that something of his restlessness lives on in their children, thus reinforcing notions of biological determinism that permeate this text; and Gray-Wolf is depicted in the stage directions as full of “*despair*” and mournful “*for his own life, for the life of his son, for his grandson, for* SPENCH, *for the* WOMEN, *for a whole race gone down into darkness*”

(211). All suggest a rather nihilistic attitude that ends the play. If, as I argue, however, the action of the play hinges on the capacity of characters to penetrate the seemingly irresolvable determinism of blood discourse and claim one another as Cherokee, and if Gray-Wolf's and Marthy's actions in the final scene suggest that such opportunities are not inevitably determined either by history or blood, then we have to admit that Riggs leaves open the potential for different choices to result in vastly different ends. Indeed, in this final scene, neither pseudo-scientific nor legalistic notions of blood organize personal and political relationships. Rather, it is the recognition, however brief, of shared histories and experiences of violence, resistance, and continuance as Cherokees which join together this multigenerational, surrogate national family as the final curtain falls.

Disrupting Time, Rewriting Nation

What then are we to make of the relationship between the more optimistic tone of the final scene—the earliest in historical time—and the pessimistic sense of doom that permeates the rest of a play whose action occurs subsequent to that scene? Are we meant to understand the play, as Jace Weaver and Daniel Justice suggest, as a relatively conventional, if nostalgic, statement on the tragic passing of Indian communities in the wake of allotment, statehood and progress? If so, why would Riggs—a man so self-conscious about the relationship between theatrical form and content with a faith in the revelatory power of politically-committed theatre to transform social conditions—tell a conventional narrative familiar to anyone versed in the ideology of Manifest Destiny?

And why go out of his way to disrupt the progressive teleology upon which such narratives depend? What are we to make of the relationship between Riggs's formal disruption of linear time throughout the play and his narrative disruption of the devastating effects of blood discourse in the final scene? Can we simply write it off as asethetic experimentation, or is Riggs making a much more incisive political commentary about Cherokee relationships and Cherokee communities?

If we reorder the scenes chronologically an interesting possibility emerges:

Achronological Structure	**Action Reorganized Chronologically**
Scene 1: Sixty-seven Arrowheads Claremore Mound, Dusk. 1915	Scene 7: The Cherokee Night. A log cabin. **Winter night. 1895.**
Scene 2: The Hatchet, Rogers County Jail. Spring Night. 1927	Scene 4: The Place Where the Nigger was Found. The woods near Claremore, Summer, 1906.
Scene 3: Liniment, A room Spring morning. 1931	Scene 5: The High Mountain, Church near Tahlequah. Noon, summer. 1913
Scene 4: The Place Where the Nigger was Found. The woods near Claremore Summer afternoon. 1906	Scene 1: Sixty-seven Arrowheads Claremore Mound, Dusk. 1915
Scene 5: The High Mountain, Church near Tahlequah. Noon, summer. 1913	Scene 6: The White Turkey. A Farmhouse. An autumn morning. 1919.
Scene 6: The White Turkey. A Farmhouse. An autumn morning. 1919.	Scene 2: The Hatchet, Rogers County Jail Spring Night. 1927
Scene 7: The Cherokee Night. A log Cabin. **Winter night. 1895.**	Scene 3: Liniment. A room. **Spring morning. 1931**

Perhaps most striking about this restructuring is the seasonal shift that takes place. When rearranged chronologically, the final scene, set at night in a season most often associated with decline and dormancy, now initiates the play, while the third scene, set on a spring morning suggesting recovery, renewal and rebirth, becomes the final scene of the dramatic narrative. Where the winter setting of the final scene contributes to the seemingly despondent and nihilistic tone with which the play ends in the achronological narrative, the chronologically reorganized structure suggests optimism and hope through the transformative power of renewal and rebirth that comes with the spring. Though one might argue for the coincidence of such a shift, especially in a play that so self-consciously experiments with dramatic and narrative form, I am hesitant to dismiss it as a happy consequence of aesthetic experimentation. That Riggs constantly drew upon seasonal settings to establish the mood and metaphorical import of both his drama and poetry, and that he addressed spring extensively throughout his personal correspondence as a hopeful, rejuvenating time of the year further suggests something more than mere coincidence.

If we admit that such a convention in the hands of a playwright like Riggs invites readers and audience members to perform such a reordering, how are we to understand the relationship between this seasonal shift and the narrative of Cherokee community the play dramatizes? To answer a question with another line of inquiry, let us imagine what kind of narrative emerges if the more affirmative and flexible models of belonging and community presented in the seventh scene become the barometers through which

Cherokee relationships are structured, rather than the historically-determined and divisive discourses of blood. What would happen, for instance, if Talbert, unencumbered by romantic illusions of cultural purity, was able to accept Gar's overtures of kinship and to redirect his knowledge into more productive acts of intergenerational healing and community affirmation? With more secure cultural and community moorings, Gar might very well have grown into a strong spiritual leader and visionary for his people. Consider also the productive lives Hutch and Art might have lived divorced from the paranoia and fear of racial prejudice and intratribal chauvinism, or the reaffirmation of matrilineal relationships Viney and Sarah might have achieved absent the internalized self-loathing of racialized cultural and class antagonisms. Pushing further, one might even speculate on the kind of father Edgar Spench could have been had he not been forced to negotiate racialized social and legal structures which denied him a legitimate place as a fully self-possessed Cherokee man.

In saving the most affirmative model of Cherokee relationships for the final scene, and setting the action of the scene as the earliest in chronological time, I believe that Riggs invites just such an imaginative rewriting of the play with Gray Wolf's and Marthy's affirmations of recognition as the rule rather than the exception. If we perform this imaginative re-scripting of the scenes in chronological time based upon this model, we are suddenly confronted with a radically different play which categorically rejects the teleological determinism of narratives of Native absence in favor of the possibility that history can, indeed, be re-written through present action. Thus, what appears in the

former arrangement a familiar tragic narrative of Indian cultural dissolution in the face of cosmic forces beyond any of the characters' control becomes in the latter at least the potential for community reaffirmation typically reserved for comedies. If this is so, perhaps the play can be read as Riggs's extended answer to Art's rhetorical question from scene two: "How did I get here? What am I doin' here?" (136).

It seems likely that had Riggs intended to simply recuperate a conventional tragic narrative of Native absence, he would have told a chronological story, since such narratives assume the inexorable and final disappearance of Native peoples, communities, and nations, regardless of what Native peoples actually do, feel, or say. Such narratives deny Native agency by obfuscating the imperial histories which force Native peoples into impossible situations and in doing so foreclose the possibility of alternative choices, possibilities, and endings. By constructing a non-chronological narrative, and situating the only scene where productive acts of claiming both kin and jurisdiction occur at the end of the play but the chronological beginning of the narrative, Riggs opens the possibility that choices for action and relationships exist on a daily basis in this life. Informed by history and armed with a critical awareness of the genocidal impulses of blood politics, the play powerfully suggests that while the past is often prologue to the future, it need not determine it. Instead of a final, despondent statement of Cherokee dissolution, declension and doom, The Cherokee Night might more productively be read through Riggs's own theory as a politically-committed, socially-symbolic attempt to imagine a kinder and more life-affirming model of nationhood and belonging.

Notes

1 Numerous scholars have traced such currents as a function of complex and rapid social transformations attending colonial conflict, interracial marriage, federal policies of assimilation, the development of racialized capitalist plantation economies, and nationalization. For studies that emphasize political and economic factors, see Wardell (1977) and McLoughlin (1992, 1994). For studies that focus specifically on slavery and its effects on Cherokee cultural and political identity, see Halliburton (1977), Littlefield (1978), Perdue (1979), and Minges (2003). Recent work by Miles (2005) and Naylor (2008) privilege the experiences of Afro-Cherokees and the legal pressures racialized ideologies exert upon questions of Indian national identity, citizenship, and sovereignty. For more general discussions of race and the Cherokee Nation, see Zissu (2001), Sturm (2002), and Yarbrough (2008). Sturm's *Blood Politics: Race, Culture and Nation in the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma* remains to date the most comprehensive and authoritative study of this history as it relates to local experience in the Cherokee Nation.

2 Even more dangerous, for Little Thunder, is her contentions that the play's obsession with blood forecloses the possibility of healthy and productive lives for characters who are products of intermarriage or who intermarry themselves. She provocatively concludes that *The Cherokee Night* has no place in anthologies of Native American theater because, in exchanging stereotype for "conscious artistry," the play reinforces distorted and damaging imaginings of Oklahoma Indian experience in the early twentieth century (364).

3 Approaching the play from he terms a "Queer Oklahomo" perspective, Womack argues that Riggs's semi-closeted homosexuality forces him to speak in "codes" that ultimately reinforce the very totalizing social paradigms he works against: "the code functions as a deep denial, a way of writing about everything except what he really wanted to write about – being Indian and gay" (303). Ultimately, for Womack, the play isn't *really* about Cherokee identity or nationhood at all. Rather, Riggs uses the framework of community as a "code" through which to engage issues of sexuality and to perform a veiled, though ultimately unsuccessful, critique of heteronormativity.

4 In her introduction to *American Indian Theater in Performance: A Reader* (2000), Darby locates the play in a tradition of Native writing that examines in brutal honesty "the intense political, social, and cultural dislocations and suffering Native peoples have faced since the first encounters with Europeans in the Americas"(x). "Throughout the play," Darby writes, Riggs contrasts the ignorance and grimness of the Cherokees' current life with their once-peaceful and thriving existence, based on ideals of family, community, and brotherhood … As grim as this play appears, the ending offers a sense of

hope, if only a flicker of light in the otherwise Cherokee night. The play ends with a solemn drumbeat, both a dirge and an affirmation for the Cherokee Nation" (xi). From this position, Darby positions the play against those that more explicitly focus on or celebrate the survival of Native communities, a tradition that Hanay Geiogamah terms "survivability" which stresses hope, possibility, and "'the ability to hang on and trust each other" in spite of overwhelming challenges and tragedies (Geiogamah qtd. in Darby x).

5 Driskill, "Han'ts: The Booger Dance Rhetorics of Lynns Riggs's *The Cherokee Night*" in *American Indian Performing Arts: Critical Redirections*, UCLA American Indian Studies Center (2010).

6 Rightly arguing for the importance of place in Native American dramatic traditions and of "platiality" in Native American dramaturgy, Stanlake writes that characters in *The Cherokee Night* "who find placement in a direct relationship with the land also connect to a series of relationships emanating from place," and that "knowing one's right relationship with place extends into knowing one's right relationship within a community, and … within the spiritual world" (71). While I agree that Riggs's play emphasizes the relationship between "right relations" with place and community, Riggs's truck isn't so much with the loss of tradition, ceremony, and spirituality as it is with history and discourse. Specifically, he dramatizes the histories, experiences, and traumatic relationships organized through blood discourse and the material and social circumstances it engenders.

7 In his 1997 monograph *That the People Might Live: Native American Literature and Native American Community*, Jace Weaver argues that the play reflects an attitude of post-allotment division, doom and despair which looks nostalgically back to the pre-allotment era as the last great hope for social, cultural and political unity. While Weaver tempers this sense of hopelessness and inexorable loss in his 2004 introduction to the play from *The Cherokee Night and Other Plays*, he nonetheless reads the statement, "Night has come to our people," as a declaration of fact rather than contingency, as an endgame rather than one move in a much longer strategic battle of community regeneration (108).

8 Justice argues that the play's obsessive preoccupation with cultural purity and individual psychological trauma subsumes political questions regarding Cherokee social and political autonomy "before the pressures of ethnicity, privileging the mutable qualities of blood over the political manifestation of nationhood" (102, 107). In denying the possibility of any of the characters locating and becoming part of an extant cultural or political community, Justice argues that the play closes the door on the possibility of any kind of productive future for the Cherokee Nation either as a political entity or a cultural

body: “Riggs’s romantic nostalgia allows only for a redemptive self-sacrifice outside of the cruel realities of this world, not a healing change in circumstances in *this* life” (102).

9 Darby has recently initiated the conversation about the structure of the play in her article, “Broadway (Un)Bound: Lynn Riggs's *The Cherokee Night*” in which she reads the play's subversion of linear time as an explicit challenge to dominant nineteenth century realist conventions, the assumed “authority of mimesis to constitute truth,” and American theater's decidedly uncritical “positivist vision” of the American Dream (9, 10). Riggs's use of “ritual time” also imbues the play with a distinctly Cherokee form of spiritual resistance rooted in the principles of opposition, balance, and reciprocity. Though Darby's analysis is provocative, I here wish to redirect the focus a bit in order not to identify what is distinctly “Native” or “Cherokee” about the structure of the play, but on how the disruption of linear time functions to continually reorient how we are to “read” the final action of the play.

10 Parker, 2-3.

11 Though I greatly respect and value the attention to tradition and the sacred that readings such as Darby's, Driskill's and Stanlake's facilitates, I am troubled by what appears to be an unstated imperative in Native studies identify elements of the sacred or traces of tradition as the only culturally redeeming or politically significant components of Native cultural productions. Such work not only forces critics into making indefensible claims—Driskill's positioning, for instance, of *The Cherokee Night* as a “booger dance,” or Stanlake's contention that each of the play's seven scenes corresponds to a *specific* moiety in the Cherokee clan system. It also frustrates explorations into the political implications of texts which do not explicitly draw upon traditionalism, ceremony, or the sacred. In the case of *The Cherokee Night*, critics failing to identify an explicitly oppositional politics or elements of the traditional or sacred have thus far failed to consider the significance of Riggs’s disruption of historical teleology as a highly critical, socially-symbolic act of resistance and a profound statement by a distinctly non-traditional, thoroughly modern mixed-blood Cherokee citizen on the destructive influences of blood discourse for and upon contemporary Cherokee communities.

12 In her critical introduction to the memoirs of nineteenth-century Cherokee musician, teacher, artists and socialite Narcissa Owen, Karen Kilcup, following Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, makes a powerful argument that locating Native writers in both tribally-specific and broader intellectual and political contexts enriches our understandings of tribal-specificity by illuminating the relationship between “a writer's negotiations with Euroamerican culture and her commitment to Native communities” (3-4).

13 *GGtL* had its Broadway debut at the Theatre Guild on January 26, 1931, and narrowly missed winning the 1931 Pulitzer Prize for Drama. *The Cherokee Night* debuted at Hedgerow Theatre on June 18, 1932 “to overflow crowds.” Hedgerow's 1933 playbill included six plays by Eugene O'Neill, five by Riggs, and four by Glaspel. Riggs's play *Russet Mantle* again garnered Pulitzer notice in 1936, but finished behind Robert Sherwood's *Idiot's Delight*.

14 Riggs's film scripts include *Laughing Boy*, MGM (1930), an adaptation of Oliver LaFarge's popular novel of the same name; *The Plainsman*, Paramount (1935); and *The Garden of Allah*, Selznick International (1936).

15 Nine years later (1950), a young Anthony Quinn would star in the leading role as “Texas” in a revised, short Broadway run of *Borned in Texas*.

16 Riggs was close friends with Ida Raugh Eastman and Susan Glaspell from the Provincetown Players; he shared a season's billing with Glaspell and O'Neill at the Hedgerow Theatre in 1933; the founder of the Hedgerow, Jasper Deeter, was with the Players from 1919-1922; the A.L.T. produced *Big Lake* in 1927; Riggs's sometimes companion Ramon Naya was a writer in residence with the Group Theatre in the early 1930s, some of the founders of which were also involved in launching the Hedgerow; he also maintained lifelong friendships with Group associate Paul Green.

17 Dos Passos was also associated with the Provincetown Players and was a founding member of the New Playwrights in 1926. Dissatisfied with the ambiguous political agendas of more asthetically-focused, middle-class companies, the New Playwrights sought to stage accessible, experimental plays of a decidedly non-bourgeois character that would be germane to the lives, experiences and expectations of an untapped labor audience. Believing realism to be an ideological vehicle for bourgeois cultural hegemony, they dramatized working class situations, characters and settings in a constructivist-symbolist form that balanced the intellectual and political pursuits of socialism with popular art forms favored by working class audiences such as vaudeville, circus, musical comedy, and burlesque. Levine 47-50.

18 Braunlich 123-24.

19 As Levine points out, what was largely absent from leftist dramatic theory was a revolutionary conceptualization of catharsis by which the audience could channel their aroused emotions on behalf of proletarian protagonists into political agitation and action. Writing in 1932, Phillip Rahv set this type of “revolutionary” catharsis in opposition to what he viewed as a decidedly aristocratic bent to Aristotelian catharsis. Where Aristotelian catharsis diffused and contained the audience's “pity and terror” into and

within “the immutable laws of life,” revolutionary catharsis located them as products of historically situated social conditions amenable to challenge and change. To Aristotle's “pity and terror,” Rahv added a “'synthesizing third factor' that he identified as 'militancy' or 'combativeness'” (124). He writes: “A proletarian drama, for instance, inspires a spectator with pity as he identifies himself with the characters on the stage; he is terror-stricken by the horror of the workers' existence under capitalism; but these two emotions [are] finally fused in the white heat of battle into a revolutionary deed...” (qtd in Levine 124).

20 Braunlich 153-56.

21 Speaking specifically of the Provincetown Players, J. Ellen Gainor describes 20s and 30s American drama as engaged in “an active critical discourse on the development of American drama,” specifically with respect to dramaturgical innovation and experimentation, debates over the relationship between commercialized theatre and socially-engaged art, and questions about conservative morality, community, and national identity (10-12). Of leftist dramatists emerging from the experimentalism of the 20s and into the more politically charged 30s, Ira Levine writes that they “shared a sense of the writer's social responsibility and a common emphasis on practical reform” and agreed that “artistic work, and especially literary and dramatic activity … were to be less a matter of personal expression than a testament of belief and an exercise of political participation. In the process, art would be remolded into an instrument of social expression” (84).

22 Riggs anticipates Warrior’s concept of intellectual sovereignty as the historically-defined intellectual processes by which Native writers actively respond to changing attitudes and circumstances by turning to Native traditions, knowledges, histories, and experiences in order to negotiate what it means to be Indian in any given historical moment. Cf. *Tribal Secrets: Recovering American Indian Intellectual Traditions* (1994), 123-24.

23 Riggs's concern with Indigenous social justice is most forcefully articulated in his play *The Year of Pilar* (1938) which chronicles the travails of an exiled hacendado family negotiating the massive land reforms of Cardenas-era Mexico. Initially exiled in New York, the Cuerpo family eventually returns to their hacienda in the Yucatan only to have it taken over in the end by Indigenous peones, one of whom is Don Cuerpo's illegitimate son by an Indigenous woman. In a powerfully symbolic finale, Riggs ties the sacrificial rape of the title character by Indigenous peones to the racialized, sexualized violence and exploitation of Indigenous peoples upon which the family's wealth and status depend, a scene which eerily anticipates the rhetoric of reciprocal violence articulated by African decolonization critics two decades later. While the critique in *The Cherokee Night* is

predominantly internally-directed at Cherokee peoples, the overall recognition of the violence and trauma attending colonialism is everywhere evident in both plays. For a provocative discussion of the hemispheric Indigenous revolutionary politics in Riggs's dramas of Mexico, see Cox, *Literary Revolutions* (forthcoming, U of Minnesota P).

24 In his introduction to the play, Weaver writes of characters "divided between progressives and pullbacks, between Christians and traditionals, separated from family, friends, and even themselves" (103).

25 Cox, *Muting* 206-08, 243.

26 In his 2008 monograph, *Red Land, Red Power: Grounding Knowledge in the American Indian Novel*, Cherokee critic Sean Teuton describes the reinterpretation of emotions from shame and self-loathing to a historically and experientially informed, politically directed anger as a productive move toward decolonization. Central to this process is the alignment of shared individual experiences of racism, violence and oppression with the larger social and historical forces acting upon communities of American Indians. I am here arguing that *The Cherokee Night* engages in a similar project by dramatizing the ways in Cherokee characters have internalized trauma as shame and self-loathing as a consequence of a historically uninformed understanding of social location rather than the product of racialized discourses of blood. S. Teuton 124-28.

27 For more detailed accounts of Osage-Cherokee relations, see Rollings 233-239, Baird 29-46, Burns 154-195, and Mathews 408-476.

28 Though Little Thunder rightly observes the failure in this scene to use the ominous presence of Claremore Mound as a vehicle through which to accurately and honestly depict the brutality of the Cherokee massacre of Osage women, children, and elderly, her indictment of Riggs as lazily falling back on stereotypical and racist notions of bloodlust is misplaced (361). It is not Riggs who rejects the kids, but Talbert, and it is his absurd, convoluted, and racist logic which Riggs puts on display.

29 McLoughlin, *Renaissance* 168-85.

30 Drawing upon Wenzel, Walter Benjamin and Dipesh Chakrabarty, Uzendoski argues that *The Cherokee Night* challenges conventional colonial narratives which frame Indigenous millenarian movements as failed attempts at resistance and decolonization. In doing so, they contain and sanitize such movements within a linear, cause and effect timeline as transitionary moments in larger teleological narratives of modernization, progress, and development. Such moves deny the possibility that millenarian movements and the prophesies that drive them survive "their apparent failures to become repositories

of aspirations for later movements" (Wezel qtd in Uzendoski 2). While Uzendoski's reading of the play as a challenge to the inexorable linearity of western master narratives of allotment and statehood is insightful, I would argue that Riggs is less concerned with recuperating the potential of Indigenous millenarianism than he is with critiquing deterministic ideological discourses that prevent Cherokee characters from exerting agency in relationships and taking control of the health and prosperity of their own communities.

31 I am here invoking Scott Momaday's now famous definition of Indigenous peoplehood as a people's "good idea of themselves" (xx) in *The Way to Rainy Mountain*. In its juxtaposition of Kiowa myths, historical and anthropological accounts of Kiowa history, and Momaday's own family narratives, *Rainy Mountain* clearly illustrates the complex textual intersections embedded in the articulation of peoplehood.

32 Unless otherwise noted, italics signify either stage directions or emphasis of dialogue as written in the play.

33 Sturm writes: "To most contemporary Cherokees, blood has become a potent hegemonic construct, a symbolic medium uniting all Cherokees to one another. Cherokee blood, in part, defines 'Cherokeeness' and anyone without Cherokee blood would automatically fall outside the boundaries of the Cherokee community" (179). Garroutte similarly examines the at times serviceable, at times problematic role that biology and blood play in articulating and negotiating Native identity. She writes that while "blood" stands as a relatively "stable" bureaucratic marker of political identity, investing a "stronger claim on identity" in racially identifiable Indian people (51-52), others reject it as a colonialist imposition whose goal is statistical extermination, as a rationale for racist federal policies and often violent cultural policing within Native communities in the name of "purity," or as a restricting paradigm in debates over the sovereign right of tribal nations to self-definition (60).

34 In his critique of the debates over William Apess's Indianness and questions over his "rightful" place in a Native intellectual tradition in *The People and the Word* (2005), Warrior argues that "Rather than waste our time debating whether or not Apess was 'Indian' enough to be considered a major figure in Native intellectualism," contemporary Native scholars should look at their own work, lives, and experiences to see if it measures up to what intellectuals like Apess and Warrior were able to accomplish in such little time and with such little resources and privileges" (47). Gar's idea of peoplehood expressed throughout the play seems to align with Warrior's critique here.

35 Toni Morrison argues that the black man as a physically-superior, threatening Other is a common motif in Euroamerican imaginations of blackness, functioning at once as the

brute, uncivilized antithesis against which civilized, white male superiority is positioned as well as a means of constructing whiteness as an unmarked, and thus impenetrable, category. Speaking of the character Jim in Twain's *Huckleberry Finn*, Morrison writes, "It is not what Jim seems that warrants inquiry, but what Mark Twain, Huck, and especially Tom need from him that should solicit our attention … the parasitical nature of white freedom" (57). Morrison's use of Twain's classic is useful here in that both red and black male others are positioned in the text for similar purposes—to provide an outlet for the redemption of white masculinity. When applied to relationships between Indian and black characters, however, Morrison's frame becomes more complicated. The "authors" of this tale of threatening black masculinity are not privileged white men, but mixed-blood Cherokee boys marginalized by the racialized power structures of both white and Cherokee societies while at the same time using those tools to marginalize blacks.

36 Cf. Naylor and Denson.

37 Cf. Halliburton, Littlefield, Perdue, Sturm, Minges, Miles, and Naylor.

38 Later, when speaking of the race-based restrictions to hold office in the 1975 constitution and the denial of voting rights in the 1983 election by Roger Nero and others, she characterizes such challenges as "a long-term frustration of the freedmen, who with only minor exceptions had been treated as an invisible faction within the Cherokee Nation for decades" (183).

39 See Sturm, Ellsworth 1982 and Katja May 1996 for references to such violence in Cherokee and Creek Nations.

40 I take this description from R. Halliburton Jr.'s 1977 monograph *Red Over Black: Black Slavery Among the Cherokee Indians*. The title reflects not only the inequitable power relations between Cherokees and their black slaves, but also the manner in which that power was consolidated through Cherokee legislation and law over a period of almost eighty years, between the early 1820s through the late 1890s. The title also indicates the degree to which such laws obfuscated – or covered "over" – complicated interracial political and kinship relations between Cherokees and blacks from before removal through allotment brilliantly. Cf. Tiya Miles, *Ties that Bind: The Story of an Afro-Cherokee Family in Slavery and Freedom* (2006).

41 Cf. Renan (11, 19) and Brennan (44) in *Nation and Narration* Ed. Homi K. Bhabha. London and New York: Routledge, 1995 [1990].

42 Not unproblematic as such narratives tend to scapegoat women and fail to critically examine masculine complicity.

43 Denson makes an important distinction between U.S. territories and Indian Territory. As Denson reads the treaties responsible for allocating parts of the Arkansas territory as Indian Territory, the I.T. was fully and wholly independent of the judicial and military authority of the U.S. Hence the massive efforts after the Civil War to absorb it into the Union by incorporating it into the United States territorial system thereby extending U.S. jurisdiction over Indian nations.

Chapter Four: Ruth Muskrat Bronson, Diplomacy and the Politics of Accommodation

In her 1993 autobiography, *Mankiller: A Chief and Her People*, the former Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation indicts the historical record of Cherokee people for erasing Cherokee women. She writes:

> An entire body of knowledge can be dismissed because it was not written, while material written by obviously biased men is readily accepted as reality. No wonder our written history speaks so often of war but rarely records descriptions of our songs, dances, and simple joys of living. The voices of our grandmothers are silenced by most of the written history of our people. How I long to hear their voices! (20)

Mankiller's own life and work evidences a continued effort to recover and honor the voices, experiences, and leadership of Cherokee women too long silenced by "authoritative" histories and to reassert the continued strength and significance of Cherokee women as contemporary agents of Cherokee life. Motivated by her peripheral involvement with the Alcatraz occupation of 1969 and her educational development and land reclamation work with Bay Area and Pit River Indian communities, Mankiller returned to her family's allotment in Adair County in 1977 and embarked on a life of grass roots community activism and political service. As economic stimulus coordinator and director of community development for the Cherokee Nation, Mankiller spearheaded the Bell Community Revitalization Project in the early 1980s, a community-driven

project that constructed water lines and renovated homes in a rural Cherokee community. This work thrust Mankiller into the political spotlight. After serving first as Deputy Principal Chief and then as Acting Chief in the Ross Swimmer administration, she was elected as Principal Chief for two consecutive terms, for which she was named *Ms.* Magazine's Woman of the Year in 1987. During her decade-long tenure as Principal Chief, the Cherokee Nation witnessed an increase in tribal citizenship from 77,000 to over 140,000; an annual operating budget eclipsing $75 million; the construction of multi-million dollar educational and health care facilities; the creation of a tribal police force; and a significant strengthening of Cherokee self-governance and government-to-government relations with the United States. Citing a desire to spend more time with family and to redirect her focus toward teaching, public outreach, and "interact[ing] with as many people as possible to dispel stereotypes about Native people," Mankiller decided not to seek a third term in office and stepped down as Chief in 1995 (Janda 130).

In addition to a being a strident defender of Cherokee sovereignty, Mankiller also became an internationally recognized diplomatic figure for global Indigenous, feminist, and human rights. Whether gathering women from across Indian Country in intimate discussions about contemporary issues facing their families, communities and nations, contributing to collections of writing by contemporary Indian women and other women of color, or standing alongside feminist allies and close friends like Gloria Steinem and Angela Davis, Mankiller's life demonstrates an understanding of Cherokee national identity that exceeds ancestry, culture, geography, history, or nationalist politics.[1] Though

firmly rooted in and always speaking from a Cherokee center, Mankiller's life-work reflects as much a commitment to coalition building across racial, national, and gendered lines as it does to building the Cherokee Nation from within. Hers was a diplomatic understanding of Cherokee nationalism and the politics of recognition, one in which performing one's cultural and political identity outside of her national home is central to strengthening Cherokee claims to nationhood and sovereignty and achieving long-term self-determination. As a central figure in the revitalization and strengthening of Indigenous self-governance and an outspoken advocate of gender equality and feminist political ideals, Mankiller holds a prominent place in the political history of both the Cherokee Nation and Indian Country. As she would be the first to admit, however, Mankiller was but one among many Cherokee women centrally committed—in both public and private affairs—to the continuance and security of their families, communities, and nations.

Born in 1897 on a small farm outside of present-day Grove in the northeastern corner of the Delaware district of the Cherokee Nation, Ruth Muskrat Bronson was such a woman, and her life and work parallel Mankiller's in remarkable ways. The fourth of seven children to a Cherokee father, James Muskrat, and an English-Irish mother, Bronson, like Mankiller, was educated in local schools, possessed a strong connection to her childhood home, and had a special relationship to her father's family. She was also influenced for the rest of her life by her early experiences and memories growing up as a citizen of the Cherokee Nation. In much the same way that the relocation of Mankiller's

family from her childhood home in Adair County to San Francisco in the 1950s laid the foundation for her later work as community organizer, political activist, and public official, so the dissolution of the Cherokee Nation in 1907 forever affected how Bronson viewed the world and the place of Indians in it. She came to believe that any real prospects for Indian self-determination would emerge not from government programs, congressional legislation and court rulings, but from the ideas, resources, and efforts of Indian people themselves.

Once politicized, Bronson, like Mankiller, spent the better part of her adult life addressing local and national Indian issues and trying to develop viable answers to the challenges facing Native communities. She dedicated her public life to increasing educational opportunities and establishing leadership training programs for Indian students as well as marshaling resources for community development and revitalization projects. As an employee with the Bureau of Indian Affairs and later as executive director of the National Congress of American Indians, she worked tirelessley to mobilize political and financial support across a wide demographic to advance Native legal claims and to combat Congressional efforts to terminate the trust relationship between Indian peoples and the federal government. Upon "retiring" in the late 1950s, she continued to work on behalf of Indian peoples, concentrating her energy on grassroots programs addressing health and development needs of Indian communities across the Southwest. Also like Mankiller, she cultivated and maintained extensive relationships with allies outside of Indian Country. Her willingness to work with and for the YWCA, the Indian

Rights Association, and federal bureaucratic and political bodies, tempered always by her dedication to the needs and interests of the Indian communities she served, produced a truly remarkable story of sacrifice, struggle, and service that affected the lives of thousands of Indian people and still resonates today.

Despite a lifelong activist commitment to Indian concerns, Bronson remains virtually unknown among Cherokee people and is remembered only in passing in larger histories of Indian political activism in the twentieth century. With the exception of Gretchen Harvey's 1996 unpublished dissertation biography, she is mentioned sparingly, usually in reference to her tenure as a teacher and advocate for Indian students and educational reform at Haskell Institute alongside Ella Deloria, her work as a founding member and early leader of the National Congress of American Indians, or the accommodationist politics of her only book-length text, *Indians are People Too*, published in 1944.[2] Individually, each of these studies contributes important insights into Bronson's life and work. They elucidate how her emerging racial identity as an Indian woman informed her lifelong commitment to educational and leadership development for Indian youth. They also explore how her critical understanding of the ways in which Native peoples were negatively positioned in the US racial and political order necessitated not only Indian racial unity but also pragmatic political alliances with BIA bureaucrats, allied ethnic political blocs, and non-Indian benevolent organizations that many Indians understandably held with suspicion, if not outright hostility. Her willingness to cultivate relationships with such groups signal for some an

"accommodationist" bent in the politics of her generation against which later Red Power activists would react and, ultimately, reject.[3]

While such scholarly treatments capture elements of Bronson's life and work within the social and historical contexts they examine, together they restrict consideration of her work to a roughly twenty-five year period in a political and professional life that spanned over fifty-nine. Though reading Bronson as a figure of mediation and accommodation captures one historically-situated element of her politics, it oversimplifies the complexity of her political commitments as they matured across the entire span of her life. Of particular interest is the fascinating (re)emergence of a proto-nationalist politics of self-determination evident in her later work that foreshadows the more overtly oppositional politics which emerged a decade later. Further, by framing her political activism in terms of her racial identity as an Indian woman, scholars minimize her primary ethno-political identification she maintained throughout her life as a Cherokee woman. In doing so, they ignore the political implications of a life's work of diplomatic service to Indian communities outside of her national home and elide the extent to which such experiences informed how she came to understand contemporary Indigenous nationhood and the politics of sovereignty in the twentieth century.

In order to appreciate the intersection between Bronson's personal experiences and political beliefs, I examine in this chapter some of her lesser known writings across a roughly fifty year period, situating each text explicitly within the personal and political contexts in which they were composed. Problematizing reductive treatments of her life

and work, I present a more nuanced picture of how her thought and activism matured in response to vastly shifting political circumstances and was fundamentally altered by her own extensive personal experiences as a Cherokee student, educator, BIA bureaucrat and political activist. Indian education and community development are central themes uniting her entire body of work. I attempt here no analysis of Bronson's educational philosophy nor do I engage larger discussions of Indian education in American history. Rather, I use her statements on education and community development to tell a narrative of political maturation that moves steadily from a bootstrap ethic of individual self-improvement to an emphasis on structural reform before shifting again to an explicit politics of sovereignty and self-determination. Doing so allows us to rethink how we approach the ostensibly "assimilationist" or "accommodationist" politics of earlier generations and to gain a greater appreciation for the political goals they espoused and the very real gains they made. Rather than a concessionary position, I reframe "accommodation" as a diplomatic strategy of negotiation necessary for cultivating the kind of wide-ranging recognition, understanding, and support for Indian issues that is central to any genuine politics of sovereignty and self-determination.

Education and the Politics of Bronson's Early Poetry and Prose

Bronson's story of Indian activism was born of and continually influenced by the families, communities, and geographies in which she moved. Her story begins with her birth in 1897 in northeastern corner of Delaware District at Cowskin Prairie just outside

of Grove, Indian Territory, to Cherokee citizen James Muskrat and Ida Kelly, a non-citizen English-Irish emigrant into the Cherokee Nation from Missouri. James's mother, Martha Fields, was the granddaughter of Richard Fields, an early advocate of removal west and an Old Settler who led an unsuccessful expedition to Mexico to secure Cherokee lands in Texas away from white encroachment. James's father, Jacob Muskrat, emigrated to Indian Territory on the *Nu-hna da-u-li i-sun-yi*, or the Trail Where They Cried, in the winter of 1838-39. Both families settled in the Delaware District in the northeastern corner of the Cherokee Nation where Martha and James met and married.

A full-blood traditionalist (7/8 Cherokee), James was a committed Cherokee nationalist and recognized community elder. As momentum for allotment culminated in the Curtis Act of 1898, which effectively extended federal control over tribal governance in Indian Territory, Muskrat became convinced that allotment, though unconscionable, was inevitable. He reluctantly encouraged his family and others to accept the terms of the Curtis Act and cooperate with the Dawes Commission, for which he served as mediator and interpreter. As with the Creek writer Alexander Posey, this work put James at odds with resistant traditionalist organizations that militantly opposed the dissolution of tribal governments and the allotment of the tribal estate, such as the Four Mothers Society, Creek Snakes, and Cherokee Keetoowahs. However, he continued to advocate cooperation and successfully registered his family and other relations with the Dawes commission.[4] According to Muskrat, her father welcomed adaptation to modernity as a strategy to promote Indigenous self-reliance and worked hard to accommodate white

cultural, economic and political practices. Though he farmed his allotment until his death in 1944, Muskrat and some of her other siblings, like Lynn Riggs, leveraged their allotments and used the proceeds to fund their continuing formal educations.

Bronson's own formal schooling began in a Cherokee primary school that operated on her father's farm. In 1904, she transferred to the new two story brick structure erected in nearby Grove in 1904 as part of the Cherokee educational system.[5] This formal education played a central role not only in Bronson's life but also in her long-term philosophy of Indian self-determination. From the first mission schools established at Spring Place, Hiwasee Town and Chickamauga in the early nineteenth century to the national school system authorized by the 1839 Constitution in Indian Territory, the Cherokee Nation had long lent qualified support to western education as a means to produce citizen-leaders capable of defending the Nation against assaults on its sovereignty as well as to equip its children with the knowledge and resources that would allow them to compete and prosper in a modernizing political economy. In 1845 it authorized the construction of what would become a vast compulsory education system comprised of over 150 “common schools” that provided basic primary education and vocational training to rural Cherokee students. Two years later, they made provisions for the Cherokee Male and Female seminaries, institutes of higher education modeled on the liberal curricula of eastern schools like Mount Holyoke, which served primarily affluent mixed-race children from the larger towns in the Nation.[6] Additionally, the Nation operated a co-educational seminary for black citizens just north of the capital of

Tahlequah and continued to support mission and subscription schools for an increasingly growing non-citizen resident population.

In less than a century formal education had become for many Cherokees a privilege most citizens expected the Nation to provide and a right their children would enjoy. Nevertheless, as at the federal level, debates raged within the Nation over the means and ends of the educational system itself.[7] Those in the outlying rural, language-speaking communities served predominantly by common schools often questioned the quality of teachers emerging from the seminaries and demanded more local control over curriculum and hiring. Others criticized the emerging class stratification cultivated by the two-tier educational system as well as the privileging of material affluence and western cultural practices fostered at the seminaries. Those from traditional, language-speaking communities lamented the lack of bilingual language instruction and the absence of Cherokee-specific content in seminary curricula, while others questioned the efficacy of a liberal arts curriculum in a society still predominantly driven economically by agriculture. While Bronson never had the opportunity to attend the Cherokee Female Seminary, she was educated in Cherokee common and primary schools and likely absorbed much of the debates over the goals and purposes of education for Cherokee and other Indian students at an early age. Such experiences would travel with her throughout her early life as she—like Eaton, Oskison, Riggs and countless Cherokees before her—left her home community to pursue higher education elsewhere in Oklahoma and abroad.

In 1912, Bronson followed her sister north of Oklahoma City near Tonkawa to the Oklahoma Institute of Technology, a preparatory school for the University of Oklahoma. Paralleling the program of study at OU, the OIT curriculum exposed students to music, European languages, business, literature, and military science. It also boasted a strong program in performing arts.[8] In her four years there (1913-16), Bronson served as associate literary editor of the school's *Crimson Rambler* to which she also contributed a handful of short stories, essays, and poems. Close inspection of these early writings reveal experiments with rhetorical and discursive strategies that Bronson would develop and draw upon throughout her life to challenge racist stereotypes and forward arguments for equality and reform.

Verses such as “The Callin' of the Farm” and “The Shady Deeps” reflect a child's idyllic memories and romantic nostalgia for northeast Oklahoma farm life.[9] They capture the speaker's powerful connection to the landscapes and natural surroundings that invested her early life with meaning and significance, a connection manifested as an irresistible homesickness which continually calls the speaker home. While the experience of homesickness was likely shared by many boarding school students, the poems also suggest a tension that reflects a particularly Indian experience of education abroad, specifically an anxiety over the relationship between higher education and one's connection to community.[10] The internal conflict in “The Callin' of the Farm” between what the speaker perceives as her duty to remain steadfast to her program of study and her desire to return to the comfort and security of home is one documented by many

Indian students.[11] The fact that the speaker feels compelled to apologize for such attachments—"do not blame me," she writes—suggests her anxious accommodation with her present situation. Education, though viewed as a necessity, appears to stand in opposition to, or in conflict with, the speaker's responsibility to community. Reflective perhaps of her own conflicted accommodation with this tension, Bronson insisted throughout her life that Indian students put their education to work in some way for their communities.

The final lines of "The Shady Deep" (1915) similarly belie any reduction of the poem as a young girl's nostalgia for home. Though the speaker seeks "God's ineffable smile" in the dark and "holy" recesses of the forest, she does so not to momentarily reconnect with natural surroundings that remind her of home, but as a refuge of "contentment / and freedom from resentment / Against the things that make life a trial" (12). Written when Bronson was eighteen, one wonders what kind of "resentment" she could have experienced and from where or whom it came. We might also wonder at the nature of the "things that make life a trial" from which the speaker seeks freedom. While many Indian students felt dislocated from their relations upon returning home from school, Bronson's family's support of education in both Cherokee and Oklahoma school systems, combined with the fact that many of her siblings also pursued higher education, would seem to rule out this parallel. "The Wail of the Helpless," published in the same edition of the *Rambler*, suggests an alternative. As the poem has never appeared in print since its first publication, I quote it in its entirety:

They have come, they have come,
Out of the unknown they have come,
Out of the great sea have they come,
Dazzling and conquering, the white man has come,
To make this land his own.

We must die, we must die.
The white-man has sentenced that we must die.
With our great forests must we die,
Broken and conquered, the Red-man must die,
He cannot claim his own.

They have gone, they have gone,
The sky-blue waters, they have gone,
The wide free prairies, they have gone,
From the hands of the Red-man, have they gone,
To be the white-man's own.

They have won, they have won,
Through fraud and through warfare, they have won,
Our council and burial grounds, have they won,
Our birthright for pottage, the white man has won
And the red-man must perish alone. (4)

Unlike the generic “farmgirl” persona of the first two poems, with whom many readers, including non-Indian readers, could reasonably identify, Bronson goes to great lengths in this poem to draw distinct racial and ethnic lines between the speaker's “Red”

people and their white dispossessors. The consistent use of oppositional pronouns demarcates in-group/out-group status, positioning “the white man” as an illegitimate occupier of Indian lands and perpetrator of violence against Indian people. Pointing to the fact of his “arrival” at, as opposed to emergence from, Indian Country, the first stanza establishes “the white man” as both “foreign” and “unknown” to “this land.” The imperative “to make this land his own” revealed in the final line of the first stanza is immediately followed by its related imperative of Indian extinction in the first line of the second. While the declarative statement, “We must die, we must die,” seems to signify the speaker's consent to this “sentence”—a word choice that connotes both prison confinement and discursive confinement within a narrative of inevitable conquest—she undermines it in the next line by identifying death not as the predetermined fate of Indian people but as a consequence of self-interested white ambition. The speaker thus rhetorically subverts the declarative confidence of the rest of the poem, revealing that what has come before and what will follow is not the “truth,” but the ethnocentric, prejudicial pronouncements of her white adversaries. The implicit moral victory embedded in the declaration of white racial triumphalism in the final stanza is similarly undermined by the speaker's depiction of that victory as a consequence of fraud, theft, and violence perpetrated by one people upon another. Within the morality of Christian charity, such a victory must be seen as no victory at all. One wonders, then, whether the “Wail of the Helpless” to which the poem refers speaks less to the dispossessed and

conquered Red-man than the "white man" who seems incapable of resisting what the poem suggests is his own (self) destructive and violent impulses.

Read in this context, the ambiguous "resentment" and "things that make life hard" from which the generic speaker seeks refuge in "The Shady Deeps" might well refer to the racism, prejudice, theft and violence revealed by the specifically *Indian* speaker of "The Wail of the Helpless." That both poems were published by "*Ruth M. Muskrat, '17*" in the same issue of the *Rambler* invites speculation on the rhetorical work the poems perform individually and as a pair. "The Wail of the Helpless" clearly identifies Bronson not simply as Indian, but an Indian with a perceptive and critical view of history who is willing to expose the lies, silences and erasures Mankiller would indict decades later. The "Muskrat" of "The Shady Deeps," on the other hand, reminds non-Indian readers that despite the seemingly intractable conflicts that exist between "Red" and "White" peoples, there still remains some common ground of experience upon which Indian and non-Indian readers might meet in good faith. Together, these complimentary rhetorical moves allow Bronson to substantiate her claims as both an Indian/Cherokee woman with a historical bone to pick with white America and as a contemporary rural Oklahoman, without having to exchange one for the other.[12] This early rhetorical strategy of establishing commonality while also levying strong historic or moral indictments—a long-standing Cherokee rhetorical tradition—appears again and again in Bronson's subsequent work.

Bronson also experimented with the inversion of popular narrative conventions, Christian morality, and liberal-democratic values, specifically with respect to how they position Native peoples within broader progressivist narratives of US expansionism. “The Killing of Gillstrape,” published in the December 1914 edition of the *Rambler*, tells the story of a group of Cherokee brothers named Wycliff, identified by the narrator as “noted Cherokee outlaws who terrorized the people of Delaware County … during the years 1907 and 1908,” and their attempt to satisfy “the Indian passion for revenge” upon a white law officer named Gillstrape. As Oskison in *Black Jack Davy*, Riggs in *Cherokee Night* and Eaton in *John Ross and the Cherokee Indians*, Bronson engages popular romantic conceptions of Indian identity less to reinforce than subvert them. The opening paragraph draws upon the image of “the dark flitting form of an Indian hunter” lurking about a forest ridge, alert and cautious with “the air of being watched” (9). Bronson introduces a group of men sporting “broad-brimmed hats,” long flannel lined coats, worn-out trousers and knee high leather boots, dress more typical of cowboys and ranchers than the painted-faced, befeathered Indian warriors of US popular culture. As with Oskison and Riggs, her use of the northeast Oklahoma dialect and regional colloquialisms further complicate stereotypical images of Indian men. In fact, Bronson's Indian hunter aligns in dress, speech, and behavior less with Chingachgook than Natty Bumppo. Other Cherokees, and most Oklahoma Indians, would likely see nothing out of the ordinary here, as farming, ranching, and western dress had long been variously incorporated into their lifeways.[13] Non-Indians conditioned by dime novels, exaggerated media

representations of Indian debauchery and popular discourses of Indian savagery, however, would at least be somewhat surprised by such descriptions.

Bronson further undermines the presupposed savagery of these Indian "outlaws" by questioning the accuracy of the Wycliff brothers' widely reported reign of terror across the countryside. Hardly a band of violent ruffians, their only previous brush with the law seems to have been "some small offense" that the narrator can't quite recall: "I think it was disturbing the peace at a small school-house," after which they fled to the hills to avoid capture by local authorities (9). In the space of a single line, the Wycliff's supposed criminality is rendered benign, "some small offense" that while perhaps incurring the disapproval of the community hardly seems to have constituted a criminal act. The fact that their supposed "crime" is innocuous enough to be unremarkable to the narrator, and that their terrorizing of the countryside seems to have entailed nothing more than simply avoiding capture until circumstances calmed down, renders sensationalist reports of terror suspect at best. In making this narrative move, Bronson draws upon actual historical examples of Cherokee nationalists who found themselves on the wrong side of federal authorities in the uncertain no-man's land of nineteenth century Indian Territory jurisdiction. Ned Christie and Zeke Proctor, the former immortalized by Oskison as Ned Warrior in *BJD*, are perhaps the two most widely known examples of the wrongful accusation of Cherokee citizens by US legal authorities and misrepresentation by US media outlets.

A blacksmith and gunsmith, Keetoowah ceremonialist, and Cherokee council member and advisor to Principal Chief Dennis Bushyhead, Christie was wrongfully accused of shooting a US marshal in 1887 amidst intense conflicts over the General Allotment Act, the tide of illegal squatters pouring into Cherokee territories, and the increasing influence of industrial interests in Indian Territory politics. Opposed to such threats and a strong advocate of Cherokee law and order, Christie turned himself in to authorities at Ft. Smith in hopes of securing bail and proving his innocence. When "the Hanging Judge" Issaac C. Parker refused bail, Christie, fearing the treatment he would receive from a non-Indian jury in federal court, fled into the hills of Adair County where he began a five year standoff with US officials. Twice attacked at his residence, Christie was finally killed by cannon fire at his home in Adair County in 1892. Twenty-six years later, Christie was cleared of all wrongdoing, reinforcing what many Cherokees believed was always a politically-motivated assassination rather than a legal execution.

As with Oskison's Ned Warrior, Bronson's narrative challenges denigrating, sensationalist treatments of Cherokee historical figures as lawless renegades, outlaws and bandits by undermining claims to accuracy and authority by clearly biased popular narratives.[14] She furthers this critique by calling the moral and legal authority of Oklahoma state law itself into question by representing Gillstrape not as the morally upright emissary of white law and order in the savage frontier, but as a "bigoted, cowardly sheriff … overbearing and cruel," who abuses his power, exploits the weak, and incites fear and mistrust in those—Indian and non-Indian—he is charged to protect (9).

Like the bigoted racist Tinsley in the final scene of Riggs's *Cherokee Night*, Gillstrape represents not just the abuse of power but also the inextricable relationship between anti-Indian racism and law in the young state. Indeed, the Wycliff's truck with Gillstrape lies not in some "savage," amoral resistance to legal authority, but in Gillstrape's merciless beating of their elderly father after he refused to give up their location, and his subsequent murder of their oldest brother, Bill (9, 10). Despite a strong motivation to deliver Gillstrape the same hate and cruelty that he showed their kin, the brothers restrain themselves and refuse to ambush Gillstrape on the masculine principle of a "fair fight." As he goes to meet Gillstrape alone, the eldest brother, John, authorizes his younger brothers to exact justice only in the event that he comes up on the losing end of the conflict. After delivering Gillstrape a thorough beating as the sheriff "begged for mercy" and providing him a rifle with which to defend himself, it is the corrupt lawman who lies dead as the dust settles from the firefight. After allowing reaction to the killing to subside, the brothers surrendered "uncompelled … and gave themselves into the hands of the new sheriff" (11). With public sentiment shifting overwhelmingly in their favor over the next three months, the brothers are eventually set free and all charges dropped.

The Wycliff's voluntary surrender to the newly installed sheriff and their submission to the authority of the law signals not a criminal disdain for legal authority but, rather a respect for law provided it is exercised honestly and fairly. These are no "savages"—whether white or Indian—occupying a lawless frontier but former citizens of an Indian nation with a long history of respect for tribal law and order. That their actions

were received with unanimous approval by the community, of which most would likely have been Cherokee, further legitimizes the Wycliff's resistance to corruption and brutality as well as their claim to moral right against arbitrary authority. The narrator thus ends the story by juxtaposing Gillstrape's violence and moral bankruptcy with the moral high ground the Wycliffs occupy. In this context, the brothers' "Indian passion for revenge" mentioned at the beginning of the story might be read less as an anachronistic relic of Indian blood law than legitimate political resistance against bigotry, racism and a blatant abuse of power by newly-elected Oklahoma state officials. Similar to Riggs' strategy in the final scene of *The Cherokee Night*, Bronson's inversion of the moral reading of conflict between Indian "outlaws" and representatives of white law and order challenges the presumed alignment of justice with western civilization, reinforces a distinctly Cherokee sense of justice and balance that exceeds both Cherokee constitutional and Western legal traditions, and undermines racist popular representations of Indian resistance to arbitrary state authority as "outlawry."

While Indian readers recalling the promises of peace and prosperity that were supposed to arrive with the "civilization" and allotment of Indian Territory would no doubt find amusement in Bronson's counternarrative, the story is not a denouncement of law and order itself, or even of the ideals, values, and promises of "civilization." Like many Native critiques of US history, "The Killing of Gillstrape" is about the failure of US, and by extension Oklahoma, society to fully realize in practice the liberal-democratic ideals and values it espouses.[15] Though perhaps suspicious of Bronson's inversion of the

progressivist morality narrative of Oklahoma statehood, many non-Indian readers would nonetheless have to contend with the accusations and indictments the story levies against that narrative and the legal order that at least partially supports it. While unquestionably assuming the moral high ground for her Indian protagonists, Bronson seeks not to alienate non-Indian readers but to encourage them to examine the values, beliefs, and prejudicial assumptions that prevent all Oklahomans from justly realizing the still-unfulfilled promises of statehood. Bronson would maintain this critical distinction between ideals and practices as she left OIT to continue her education and eventually assume a more active role as Indian activist and public intellectual.

After graduating from OIT in 1916, Bronson spent the next year and a half in teacher training, first at the Henry Kendall Academy in Tulsa and then at Northeastern State Normal School in Tahlequah, before teaching in Oklahoma public schools from 1917-1919. That September she enrolled at the University of Oklahoma, overlapping with Riggs for a single year, where she majored in English and maintained a strong professional and social life as a member of Theta Sigma Phi, the American Journalists Association, the Student Christian Fellowship League and the Delaware County Club. Her funds exhausted by the winter of 1920, Bronson left OU and took a position with the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) as recreational coordinator on the Mescalero Apache reservation. Perhaps influenced by her own experiences of homesickness and dislocation as a boarding school student at OIT, Bronson developed programming to help returning Apache girls readjust to reservation life. An essay

documenting her time at Mescalero won Bronson the attention of executives in the YWCA who awarded her a three year scholarship to the University of Kansas, where, accompanied by another sister, Jewell, she enrolled in the school of journalism in the fall of 1921.

The essay also drew the attention of the World's Student Christian Federation, the youth and student arm of the global ecumenical movement focused on improving interracial understanding, promoting world peace, and advocating for social justice through cross-denominational Christian outreach. They extended her an invitation to the organization's annual gathering of over 200,000 students from fifty-nine countries held in Beijing, China in April of 1922. Traveling as a guest of the National Board of the YWCA, Bronson represented American Indians as one of nineteen US delegates in attendance. Along the way, she delivered a variety of lectures, at times up to six a day, focusing on US-Indian relations, Indian cultures and traditions, and leadership and community development through education.[16] From these experiences generally, and from her identification as a Cherokee woman with Koreans then under Japanese colonial rule, Bronson began developing what she would later refer to as her "race consciousness" as an Indian *and* Cherokee woman. Recalling arguments by William Apess, anti-removal Cherokee nationalists like John Ross, and Indian GIs returning from WWI, Bronson believed colonialism and racism to be antithetical to Christian moral values and democratic equality. She thus began cultivating the egalitarian language and ethos of Christian brotherhood as an ethical counterweight to white racial prejudice and as yet

another discursive strategy of advocacy and mediation between Indian and non-Indian communities.[17]

Upon her return stateside, Bronson enrolled at Mount Holyoke in South Hadley, Massachusetts in the fall of 1923 on a full scholarship with advanced standing, where she majored in English and minored in economics and sociology. As the only American Indian student to ever attend the college, she would recall later feeling less like a first American or even a US citizen, and more like a foreign national, which, in a very real sense, she was. Like Elias Boudinot and John Ridge before her, Bronson quickly came to understand the general ignorance of most Americans about American Indian history as well as the contradiction between the progressive, assimilationist rhetoric of racial inclusivity and the practice of racial othering. Bronson captures this racialized experience of marginalization in a story published in the *Mount Holyoke Monthly* in 1923 and republished in a collection of undergraduate writing two years later. "The Serpent" tells the story of a Cherokee mother's attempt to protect her youngest daughter from the violent, sexual intentions of a corrupt Indian agent who has previously assaulted numerous other Cherokee girls, including her older sister, with whom he fathered several mixed-blood children. Anticipating his intent to rape her daughter as he escorts her into town to sign paperwork finalizing her allotment—a powerful image of sexual assault that parallels the offensive against tribal governance and rape of Indian lands—the mother, Nancy Qualate, secures a poisonous snake Indigenous to their Spavinaw river homeland and releases it at the Indian agent upon his arrival at her home. The snake strikes the

agent and quickly incapacitates him. As the story ends, the agent writhes in pain on the verge of a certain death as the mother patiently and deliberately watches on.[18]

As in "The Killing of Gillstrape, "The Serpent" levies a strong critique against abusive authority, racism, and concentrated bureaucratic power over Indian lives. Where a bigoted legal system and popular prejudice conspire against justice and moral equity in the former, exploitative Indian affairs officials and forced educational policies contribute to violence, trauma and retribution in the latter. Absent protection either from representatives of the Oklahoma legal system or the Office of Indian Affairs, characters like the Wycliffs and Nancy Qualate are forced to seek redress outside of state authorized legal and bureaucratic channels. Refusing to consent to their own victimization, they turn instead to Cherokee clan law and medicinal practices as alternate means through which to obtain justice and protect themselves and their families. The unspeakable violence perpetrated by Gillstrape and the agent against the most vulnerable in Indian communities lends narrative legitimacy and moral weight to these "extralegal," some might say "vigilante," measures. However, both narratives suggest that the "extralegal" or "vigilante" only have meaning in the presence of a functioning justice system capable of protecting all parties equally. Absent this fundamental protection, that which exists outside of the law becomes an alternative measure of self-defense. In laying bare the limitations and failures of a biased legal and political order, these stories reveal a fundamental contradiction in federal Indian policy—the institutions that in theory were supposed to raise Indian peoples out of savage violence and want and into civilized

security, comfort, and prosperity were transformed in practice into mechanisms of violence, disempowerment and dispossession. Suspicious of the ends of federal policy and the institutions through which it is imposed, Bronson's Cherokee protagonists retain Indigenous cultural practices and beliefs—targets of allotment and assimilationlist policies—as communitist countermeasures to federal corruption and state violence.

Though Bronson's addition of sexual violence committed against Cherokee boarding school students while under the protection of OIA officials in "The Serpent" intensifies her critique of corruption and graft, she nonetheless maintains the distinction between individual corruption and the institutions themselves. Similar to the progressivist, reformist politics of the Society of American Indians, Bronson believed more in reforming federal institutions like the Office of Indian Affairs and Indian education than in abolishing them.[19] Despite their shortcomings, she felt that they still served a necessary purpose, providing much-needed services, opportunities, and protections for Indian peoples than were otherwise available. Specifically, she believed in the promise that education held for a younger generation of Native people and was strongly committed to reforming existing federal Indian educational programs to better meet the needs of Indian students and to expand the opportunities such programs provided. Momentum toward genuine Indian policy reform in the 1920s and 30s would provide the political will, economic resources, and bureaucratic support necessary to gain traction toward some of the programs she hoped to develop.

Momentum for Reform and the Council of One Hundred

While genuine reform was still a decade away, the devastating effects of allotment and assimilationist policies on Indian communities and the seemingly unlimited power of the Office of Indian Affairs, codified by the Omnibus Act of 1910, began drawing intense criticism from Indians and progressive reformists alike.[20] It was a time, as Tom Holm writes, characterized by "ideological conflict and institutional confusion that punctuated assimilation and created a philosophical void in policy making that John Collier's ideas would fill in the 1930s" (xi). Criticism of agent prejudice, graft, and misconduct on reservations began to mount while efforts to tax Indian allotments in Oklahoma (1912), extinguish Pueblo title to land in New Mexico (1913), and criminalize peyote use in reservation spiritual communities (1914, 1918) ran afoul of the Supreme Court. Events such as these mobilized pro-Indian political activism by groups such as the All Pueblo Council, the SAI, the Indian Rights Association, and the American Indian Defense League, resulting in significant victories for Indian rights.[21] As the 1920s got under way, it became obvious to both proponents and opponents of assimilation that American Indian peoples refused to vanish as policy experts had predicted.[22]

Though such victories signaled a potential shift in federal policy thinking, Warren Harding's appointment of former New Mexico senator Albert Fall as Secretary of the Interior and his subsequent assaults on Indian trust protections further galvanized the disparate reformist-minded factions across Indian Country and the US.[23] A consortium of the All Pueblo Council, non-Indian advocacy groups, and influential artists, intellectuals

and socialites combined in 1922 to defeat legislation submitted at Fall's request by New Mexico senator Holm Bursum. Known as the Bursum Bill, the measure would have retroactively confirmed non-Indian land claims in New Mexico held for more than ten years before 1912, thus undermining Pueblo Spanish land grant claims in the state. Similar measures forwarded by Fall to buy out Indian trust claims and evacuate tribal rolls as well as abrogate Indian rights to reservation oil, gas, and mineral resources were also soundly defeated. Implicated in the Teapot Dome scandal of 1923 and humiliated by a series of legislative and legal defeats, Fall resigned and was replaced by Harding's postmaster general, Hubert Work. Work's primary task was to repair the reputation of the Harding administration and the Office of Secretary of Interior.[24]

Hoping to address current crises and anticipate future potentially explosive federal Indian policy issues, Work convened the Council of One Hundred in 1923 to identify specific problems and discuss potential reforms. Comprised of leading non-Indian "experts" on federal Indian policy, the Council also included a significant number of influential, nationally-known Indian figures, including many members of the SAI. In attendance were Henry Roe Cloud (Winnebago), Reverend Sherman Coolidge (Arapaho), Dr. Charles Eastman (Dakota), Thomas Sloan (Omaha), and Arthur C. Parker (Seneca) (fig. 1). The council, chaired by Parker, passed a series of resolutions supporting increased funding for Indian education and vocational training, improved health and sanitation programs, a quick and equitable resolution to Pueblo land claims, and opening the federal court of claims to tribal peoples.[25] Due to influential connections at the

Fig. 1. Council of One Hundred, December 13, 1923. Ruth Muskrat is in regalia ninth from right; President Coolidge is facing forward to her left.

YWCA and the notoriety she drew from her participation at the WSCF conference in Beijing, Bronson was asked to participate at the gathering and to contribute a paper concerning Indian education reform. She was later invited to have dinner with President and Mrs. Coolidge after which she commented on his affability but was skeptical of his commitment to reform over the wishes of the BIA.[26] Although Congress passed the Indian Citizenship Act and Pueblo Claims Act the next year, Bronson's skepticism proved prescient, as the meeting ultimately had little effect on the status quo of broader federal Indian policies. For Bronson, however, the Council provided the first direct experience in political advocacy, diplomacy and mediation that would come to characterize the overall trajectory of her work.

On December 13th, the second day of the conference, Bronson delivered a speech entitled "Indian Leadership, Past and Present" that focused on the needs of American Indian students and leadership development among a new generation of Indian youth.[27] Donning intertribal buckskin regalia, gifted to her by Apache and Comanche women and designed to emphasize Indian racial identity over tribal affiliations, she pushed for more colleges, scholarships, and other educational opportunities for Indian students. She then presented newly inaugurated President Calvin Coolidge with a copy of G.E.E. Lundquist's recent study of contemporary Indian conditions, *The Red Man in the United States.* Adorned in a buckskin cover decorated with Cheyenne beadwork, written by a non-Indian of the Inter-church movement, and published by the Rockefeller-supported Institute of Social and Religious Research, the book as artifact reflects the cooperative attitude and pragmatic politics of the gathering itself.

Like most "pro-Indian" treatises of the period, the politics of the book are ambivalent with respect to the ends of policy reform. In its assumption of assimilation as the primary reformist goal and its reliance on Christian intervention as the most effective means of addressing material and political issues, the text recuperates some of the very institutional prejudices that Indians and progressivist secular reformists were working hard to displace. This perhaps explains its relative obscurity in histories of the reform era. In a decade in which a voluminous number of investigations, reports and inquiries into administrative gaffs and federal policy failures with respect to Indian affairs were published, *The Red Man and the United States* was both too conventional and too

historically myopic to exert any influence on the direction of reform. In other ways, however, the text made significant interventions. In its emphasis on contemporary challenges and devastating inequities facing reservation communities, the book moved away from social evolutionist assumptions that often defined federal policy discussions. Its survey of Indian communities and its mandate that Indians themselves play a significant role in solving the problems it documented—if only as an adjunct to federal and religious programs—also set it apart from the blatant paternalism of policy-makers, bureaucrats, and many white Indian rights reform groups. As she presented the text to Coolidge, Bronson emphasized these characteristics to frame policy reform for the new president.

Gifting the text "in behalf of the many Indian students of America," Bronson asserts that the book "gives, for the first time, a comprehensive account of the social, economic, and religious conditions among my people as they are today" and "bears the best we have to offer-the story of our struggles and our tragedies, of our victories and our developments" (1). Reflecting productive alliances between non-Indian allies and contemporary Native people, Bronson asserts that the book demonstrates both "the story of the old type of Indian, greeting with the hand of friendship the founders of this great nation, and the story of the new Indian emerging from his semi-barbaric state, tilling the soil, and building for citizenship under the guidance of school." With respect to what she wryly refers to as "the so-called Indian problem," Bronson reasonably asks, "May not we, who are Indian students of this generation, who must face the burdens of that problem,

say what it means to us?" (1). Bronson offers just such a story, shifting the discussion from an oppositional narrative of presence to a historically-informed narrative of Native benevolence, patriotism, intellectual innovation, and agency.

As in "the Wail of the Helpless," Bronson lays claim in "Indian Leadership" to primacy of place and moral right by recalling the spirit of hospitality and friendship with which leaders like Powhatan and Massasoit welcomed "strange people to the shores of [their] country and called them brother" (1). She then recalls figures like King Phillip, Chief Joseph and Tecumseh, patriotic Indian military thinkers revered among Indians "as great leaders who, like the American revolutionaries, had the courage to fight, campaigning for their honor, martyrs to the soil of their fathers." Others like Cornstalk, Red Jacket and Sequoyah drew upon their Indian "energy," "ambition," and "keen penetration of vision" to emerge as statesmen and intellectuals capable of guiding their people along "new paths" in a new age (2). Hardly relics of the historical past, Bronson argues that the same innovative energy and "potential for greatness" that these leaders possessed still exists in a new generation of Native leaders ready and willing to embrace US citizenship and the challenges and promises of modernity. "Our old life has gone," she writes, "A new trail must be found, for the old one is not good to travel farther. We are glad to have it so" (2).

Though, like Eaton, Bronson too easily concedes acculturation and citizenship as necessary components of this new trail—"We want to understand and to accept the civilization of the white man; we want to become citizens of the United States and to

share in the building of this great nation that we love"—she contends that it need not entail abject assimilation or the rejection of Indian lifeways as preconditions for implementation (3). Reflecting a commitment to cultural pluralism that she would hold throughout her life, Bronson argues that the most successful programs will allow Indian peoples "to preserve the best that is in our own civilization" so that they might "make our own unique contribution to the civilizations of the world" (2). Believing strongly in the power of education to better the lives of Indian communities, Bronson observes that the only thing preventing "this vigorous and by no means dying race" from success is inadequate access to educational opportunities that would arm Native students with contemporary tools by which to "guide their people along new and untried paths" and ensure "economic independence" in a modern world (2, 3). Like the political, military and intellectual leaders of the past, this generation of Native peoples would draw upon all available opportunities, including those "which have been afforded us by the interest of the white man," to lead their communities into a new age of "nobility and greatness" (3). With more schools, better infrastructure and greater "encouragement and help from our White Brothers," she writes, "the trail ahead for the Indian looks clear and bright with promise" (3).

As with other Indian writers and activists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Bronson "speaks back to civilization" with a critical voice, challenging its advocates—President Coolidge, Secretary Work, and other white progressives in attendance—to live up to the ideals of self-reliance, self-improvement,

and racial uplift they espouse.[28] Hoxie writes that Indian activists of her generation "presented themselves not as disinterested scholars but rather as advocates of Indian culture who believed that their Indigenous heritage was equivalent to modern 'civilization' and that they would be considered fellow human beings rather than members of a 'savage' race" (15). Bronson's emphasis, for instance, on contemporary material conditions, as opposed to innate Indian racial and cultural deficiencies, implicitly challenges conventional representations of Native peoples rooted in ahistorical, social evolutionist assumptions of Indian disappearance. Recalling the narrative inversions of her short stories, Bronson's recuperation of Indian military leaders as intelligent, innovative, and patriotic defenders of their homes and families, rather than as anachronistic impediments to US development and expansion, similarly undermines the savage/civilized binary upon which much federal Indian policy and discussions of reform turned. Her narrative of historical adaptation and innovation across Indian history similarly asserts a narrative defined by historical change rather than cultural stasis, continuity and innovation—indeed, continuity through innovation—rather than interruption and degradation, and survival rather than extinction. By claiming, and thus authorizing, the story as her own and that of the entire Indian race only now being told, Bronson anticipates Mankiller's insistence that long-silenced American Indian voices play a central role in any debates concerning solutions to "the so-called 'Indian problem.'" Indians were not in the past nor are they now silent victims "trapped" in or victimized by

history. Rather, they have done what all peoples have done in the face of change: adapt, innovate and move forward.

These narrative revisions of popular Indian history allow Bronson to move discussions of reform away from highly partisan and essentially irresolvable questions about Indian racial and cultural "fitness" to more pragmatic, actionable questions about institutional reform, access to educational opportunities, and Indian economic independence. The "Indian problem we who are Indians find ourselves facing" is not a question of the abject political and cultural assimilation of Indian peoples, but the desire for a more productive integration of Indian communities into the US body politic. For this to occur, it follows that Native peoples must have a seat at the table and a forum to voice their needs, concerns, experiences, and desires. One-way, one-size-fits-all solutions imposed by Washington "experts" with little to no understanding of or relationship to Native peoples are no longer viable, if they ever were. What the commission represented, and what Bronson chose to drive home, was a return to more equitable Indian-US relations based in respect, cooperation and exchange. That she delivers this critique to a sitting US president in a city named after a "founding father" whose Indian policy at least theoretically promised such cooperation further underscores the political import of Bronson's message.

Despite such rhetorical inversions and subversions, Bronson's pronouncements of the extinction of the "old life" and her expressions of "gratitude for the opportunities for education and culture which have been afforded us by the interest of the white man" are

hard to stomach for many contemporary readers reared in the resistant rhetorics of Civil Rights and the American Indian Movement. Absent in Bronson's account is the history of colonial violence, dispossession, and genocidal government policies which were largely responsible for the "social economic, and religious conditions" to which she refers. Similarly, the educational and cultural "opportunities" ostensibly granted Native peoples "by the interest of the white man" were not gifts at all, but hard-fought treaty provisions negotiated in exchange for Native land cessions and promises of peace, a distinction that would become central to her later critiques of termination. There also exists in Bronson's speech a propensity to speak on behalf of all Native people, particularly in their presumed desire "to accept the civilization of the white man" and "to become citizens of the United States," both of which were contentiously debated throughout Indian Country—indeed, within the Cherokee Nation itself—in the first part of the twentieth century.[29] One might legitimately read such passages as evidence of the degree to which some Indian peoples, particularly those like Bronson of mixed-blood descent with Eastern educations and Christian affiliations, had internalized racialized discourses of cultural evolution.[30]

Considering her audience and the general purpose of the gathering—to bring influential white and Indian actors together on the common ground of reform—her choice not to launch a full frontal assault on federal Indian policy makes perfect rhetorical sense. Recalling the discursive strategies evident in her earliest writing and her perceptive understanding of the relationship between political goals, rhetorical style and audience, her use of such discourses likely reflects at least a partially-strategic move to establish

common rhetorical ground before delivering a sound critique. Sitting alongside passages which bemoan the passing of the "old life" and valorize cultural assimilation rest assertions that Native peoples constitute "by no means [a] dying race of people"; that even if the "old life has gone," there nonetheless exists an "awakened spiritual vigor" in Native communities evidenced in a steadfast desire to "preserve the best that is in our own civilization" in order to make a "unique contribution" to the future (2, 3). Further, by recovering and recuperating Native political, military and intellectual leaders of the past and connecting them to the struggles of contemporary Native youth, Bronson prefigures Warrior's notion of intellectual sovereignty—i.e. the critical practice of turning to Native intellectual traditions in order to come to some experiential understanding of the challenges facing contemporary Indian peoples.[31] Though Bronson certainly recognizes that the challenges facing Native peoples of her own time are vastly different—and, she suggests, potentially more threatening—than those of previous generations, she nonetheless locates them within a wider historical network of mutually influential relationships, or what Devon Mihesuah has identified as the "common context of colonization."[32] Carefully couched in the rhetorics of accommodation, then, is the language of survivance, evidenced in a steadfast demand of a Native voice and a Native presence in the future Bronson envisions. The account of Native futures in her speech to the Council exceeds savage/civilized, assimilationist/traditionalist dichotomies by staking out a place for Native peoples to speak and act for themselves. Believing education to be the engine capable of effecting Indian agency and self-reliance, Bronson dedicated the

next two decades of her life to creating opportunities for Native students and reforming the educational system itself.

From Bootstrap Ethics to Institutional Critique

Two years after the Council of One Hundred, Bronson graduated from Mount Holyoke and boarded a train for Tahlequah to assume a summer position as special instructor and dean of women at Northeastern State Teachers College, where she assisted female students transitioning into college life. A year later, she accepted a position in the education division of the Office of Indian Affairs where, at the age of twenty-eight, she could focus her attention specifically on Indian students.[33] Her first assignment was as an eighth grade teacher at Haskell Institute in Lawrence, Kansas, where she served for three years alongside Dakota anthropologist, novelist, and educator Ella Deloria. While there, she attempted to break down some of the educational barriers Native students faced, exposed them to the advantages and possibilities education had afforded her, and encouraged other Indian women to pursue higher education in service of their communities.[34] Her youthful confidence in the American bootstrap ethic, however, would continue to obfuscate her understanding of the relationship between institutional racism, individual success and community development.

An address she gave at a New Year's celebration while an educator at Haskell, later published in the February 1927 issue of *The American Indian*, provides one clear example of Bronson's early thinking and reveals the limitations embedded in liberal

rhetorics of self-reliance and racial uplift. Invoking the romantic, racialized notions of Indian nobility, Bronson calls upon Haskell students to remember the "heritage of courage and fearlessness" of Indian leaders of the past like King Philip and Sequoyah, and use them as models for meeting contemporary challenges. Faced with unimaginable challenges and against great odds, both men addressed "the crises of their time and rose nobly to meet them" (2). Bronson encourages a new generation of Indian students to meet a new series of challenges with the same vigor, commitment, and energy. The stakes, Bronson asserts, are nothing less than the survival and security of Indian people: "We are the hope of the Indian race! And on the shoulders of this generation of Indian youth does rest the responsibility and the glory of our race … I have believed for a long while that the Indian race is now at the greatest crisis in all of history! I believe we must literally live or die on the merit of the present generation" (2). To compound this responsibility, Bronson notes that all Indian peoples will be judged by the successes or failures of a select few: "Because we are a small group in the midst of an alien civilization, the focus of all eyes are centered upon us. Every success we make, every failure is conspicuous. Because we are such a small group no Indian boy or girl has a right to be a failure, for by failing we not only pull ourselves down but we pull down our whole race" (3). To put it bluntly, failure is not an option for to do so would be to sentence Indian families and communities to the ashbin of history.

Consistent with her belief that Indian education was only useful to the extent that Indian students used it in service to their communities, Bronson admonishes the students

not to turn away in fear from the enormity of this responsibility but to embrace it as their *raison d'etre*: "The realization of this great responsibility ought to overshadow every action of our lives. It ought to color every waking thought we have or every action we take with the fire of its challenge" (2). She implores them to take advantage of the "vital, rich opportunities" at Haskell and to remain strong in their convictions even in the face of criticism and opposition (3). Stressing individual responsibility and self-improvement—indicative perhaps of her own middle-class upbringing, education, and experience—Bronson encourages students to take the best of both Indian and non-Indian worlds to lead their "race" back to prominence and self-sufficiency. Seeming to reject the collectivist ethos that organizes tribal thought and relationships, a not uncommon position in the liberal-progressivist Indigenous politics of the day, Bronson argues that Indian survivals boils down to a question of individual desire, determination and commitment.[35] Deploying the rhetoric of hard work and dogged determination, she claims that the "rich treasures of an education" are available to any "Indian boy or girl *who wants it bad enough*" (3). "A great race," she continues, "must be made up of great individuals. And if we would be a great race we must put our minds to the difficult task of living greatly" (3).

At this point, Bronson goes on a lengthy indictment of what she viewed at the time as the propensity of Indian students to direct their energies and efforts into frivolous activities and rely too easily on narratives of victimization. Rather than investing time in popular romances, sensationalist fiction and other "lesser things," Bronson charges students to engage "good literature," to produce great art, and to cultivate their own

"spiritual development" which Bronson believed to be one of the Indians' "greatest contributions to mankind" (3). To make such a choice, she insists, requires students to recognize that time is precious, that resources are limited, that average is unacceptable, and that bitter narratives of victimization, though possessing historical weight, ultimately disable Native peoples. To blame others for current conditions prevents Indians from accepting the personal responsibility to change them: "As a race, we think too much about the past, and we dwell too long on what some one has done to us. We do not think enough about what we are doing to ourselves and for ourselves" (3). Though she insists that "[i]t is time now that we begin to stand on our own feet," Bronson believes that Indian students too easily become frustrated, distracted, and disinterested in their studies. Consequently, they either fail to achieve their full measure of potential or drop out as "Quitters!" at the first sign of difficulty, unable "finish what had been begun" (3). Reminding students of the consequences of failure, each Indian student who drops out, or goes "A.W.O.L." as she puts it, mortgages away not only their futures but "the hopes of hundreds and thousands of people" (15). Encouraging students to recover "the patience and courage that is necessary to give us the power to see a thing through," Bronson writes:

> We must *determine* what the future of our race is going to be. You and I must decide right now, today, whether we want it to live on, worthy of the great traditions of the past. Or whether we are willing to see it fall deeper and deeper into decay. *By the lives we each determine to live*, and by our

> *power to make such a determination into reality*, we can show our choice. There is no other convincing answer. (15, emphasis added)

"Your choice must be of your own," she concludes, "and it is a deliberate choice" either for or against the futures of all Indian people (15).

Bronson's confidence in the rhetorics of hard work and determination ring naïve. Her derision of Indian drop-outs as lacking strength, courage, and determination reflects a limited understanding of the multiple causes that might explain success of one student and the failure of another. Though Haskell and most other boarding schools had become much more "Indian friendly" by the time of Bronson's arrival—encouraging, for instance, Indian cultural and artistic production, removing restrictions on speaking heritage languages, and incorporating elements of Indian culture and history into the curriculum—many students still resented their overall acculturative mission, their regimented curricular and cultural discipline, and their effort to distance them from their families and communities.[36] Not surprisingly many viewed running away, or going "AWOL" as Bronson puts it, as legitimate acts of defiance and resistance. Economic conditions and kinship obligations also forced many students to leave school. Hardly "quitters" lacking the fortitude to finish what they started, many dropped out in order to provide for their families, take care of elders, or simply contribute what they could in tough economic times.[37] Further, many of the frivolous, "lesser" things Bronson attacks were likely highly significant for students. Tribally- and regionally-centered social groups and overnight off-campus stomp dances allowed students to bring a bit of home to their campus lives and to

reaffirm tribal identities, kinship relations, and cultural practices. Even collectively-engaged nighttime pranks against facilities and personnel suggest "deliberate choices" students made to claim agency over and take responsibility for lives and conditions not entirely of their own making.[38]

Her emphasis on individualism and individual responsibility also rings hollow, particularly in light of the failure of allotment and assimilation policies to usher Indian communities into an age of prosperity and self-reliance. Not only had allotment reduced the tribal land base by over eighty-seven million acres in just under forty years, but administrative graft, competency restrictions, the guardian system and federal supervision of land and resource contracts collectively subjected newly "emancipated" Native communities to unprecedented levels of poverty unseen under their own forms of self-government. Additionally, the boarding school system, though partially reformed from its early mission to kill the Indian and save the man, also separated families, deprived generations of Indian students early cultural educations in their own lifeways, and created ideological divides among communities. If allotment sought to break the political will of Native governments by breaking up the tribal estate and fracturing extended family networks, boardings schools sought to undermine social and cultural bonds that held families and communities together. That such efforts largely failed is a testament to the strength of Indian communities and the innovation and adaptation of generations of students who returned home bent on reviving cultural practices and who gathered with

others on the national level to defend the political rights, tribal relationships, and cultural practices allotment and assimilation were supposed to extinguish.

Bronson's individualist optimism and bootstrap ethic echo the progressivist politics of self-reliance common among Indian activists of her time. Some, like Yavapai doctor and activist Carlos Montezuma, called for the immediate abolishment of the BIA coupled with a universal extension of US citizenship to all Indians.[39] Careful not to throw the baby out with the bathwater, other Indian leaders like Arthur Parker, John Oskison and Gertrude Bonnin advocated reforms of bureaucratic institutions that, while imperfect and at times openly hostile to Indian interests, nonetheless provided much needed services and protections that Indian communities desperately needed. Common to both positions was a profound belief that increased individual and community self-determination was the only way Native peoples might recover from the fallout of the policies of the previous three decades.

With respect to formal education, many Indians recognized the benefits that English literacy and western education afforded their communities, particularly as it prepared their students for lives in an industrial world. At the same time, they remained highly critical of the community and cultural dislocations fostered by an overly zealous and blatantly anti-Indian system. Paralleling similar debates in the Cherokee Nation decades earlier, the question for Indians like Bronson was not whether Indian children should receive formal western education, but how the system might be reformed to better serve Indian interests.[40] While incorporation into the US body politic as citizens was a

contentious issue in early twentieth century Indian politics, for Indian progressives like Bronson, citizenship, education, and integration into the US socio-economic order as individuals were not viewed as hand maidens of assimilation but necessary protections guaranteeing that Native peoples might come into the US body politic in their own time and on their own terms as Native people.

Despite its naiveté, this speech, like her presentation to Coolidge, evidences the gravity of the material and economic challenges facing Native peoples and a strong commitment to boldly address those challenges. While elements of her argument appear unsympathetic and naïve, we must recognize that, like the Red Progressives of the previous generation, Bronson believed that Indian peoples, as First Americans, deserved the same rights, protections, and equal opportunities that other Americans enjoyed, and looked to citizenship, education, and individual self-reliance as crucial mechanisms through which to achieve that goal. In defining success strictly as a function of hard work, determination, and stick-to-itiveness, however, Bronson lays the enormous responsibility to succeed entirely on the shoulders of Indian students. She had not yet come to understand how the language and assumptions of liberal bootstrap ethics reduces complicated social and political issues to matters of individual responsibility and depoliticizes what has always been, for Native peoples, expressly political issues of land tenure, sovereignty, and self-determination. Her continued tenure at the BIA would go a long way in providing her such an understanding.

In 1927, at the age of thirty, Bronson exchanged her teaching position for a post as registrar and supervisor of Haskell's Outing Program for young women.[41] With the installation of the Hoover administration and a shift in BIA leadership in 1930, she accepted a position as Guidance and Placement Officer for the Office of Education which she held concurrently with her position at Haskell.[42] In addition to locating job opportunities for boarding school graduates, she administered federal loan and scholarship funds and placed students from Haskell, Chilocco, and the American Indian Institute in Wichita in a wide range of colleges, universities, trade schools, and professional programs.[43] In early 1931, Bronson left Haskell to assume the responsibilities of Guidance and Placement Officer full time, and relocated with her new family first to Kansas City, Missouri and then to Vinita, Oklahoma where, in addition to her other duties, she administered the Indian Higher Education Loan Program appropriated by Congress for the 1931-32 academic year. She was also charged by Lewis Meriam with conducting a survey on the state of Indian education in both government and mission schools across the US. Completed in 1932, the report documented basic academic, economic, and social conditions at various schools; surveyed student successes and failures; revealed woefully low academic standards; and exposed widespread bias among teachers against Indian “fitness” for non-vocational curricula and the possibility for academic achievement.[44] Bronson parlayed the attention the report attracted into broad recommendations for reforms of the loan and scholarship program, a significant

component of which included the incorporation of Indian students into state public schools and a gradual phasing out of the boarding school apparatus.[45]

A paper given before the Committee on the American Indian at the National Conference on Social Work in 1931 outlines Bronson's rationale for such reforms, and points to a shift in Bronson's thinking concerning the direction and intent of federal policy. “The Indians' Attitude Toward Cooperation” levies a general critique of federal policies of wardship, restriction, and segregation, and specifically argues for the incorporation of Native students into state educational systems coupled with a gradual phasing-out of federally-operated boarding schools. The “cooperation” evoked in the title refers to jurisdictional questions between state and federal governments and Indian communities that emerged after the passage of the Indian Citizenship Act seven years earlier. Of particular concern for states was whether and to what extent they would assume from the federal government primary legal authority over Indian individuals and lands and be responsible for administering social responsibilities like health care, public education and other services formerly managed through the BIA.[46] The continued restricted trust status of Indian individuals and allotments, unsettled tribal claims against the federal government over the management of tribal estates, and the bureaucratic authority the BIA exerted over virtually every aspect of Indian lives complicated any neat resolution to such questions. Despite the designs of allotment policies and the Citizenship Act, Indian peoples remained legal and political anomalies in the United States. Participants on the panel at which Bronson spoke, which included Lewis Meriam, were

centrally concerned with articulating and understanding these relationships, and forwarding cooperative social policies that would best address the material needs of Indian communities.

Unlike Bronson's implicit criticism of federal policy evident in her early writings and her address to Coolidge, “The Indians' Attitude Toward Cooperation” explicitly indicts wardship and segregation as “a deeply humiliating experience” that reaches across generations ultimately impeding Native peoples from fully enjoying the rights, privileges, and presumed benefits of their recently-acquired citizenship (33). For Indians from her grandmother's generation the restrictions and limitations of wardship serve as a consistent reminder of the pain and loss engendered by allotment and statehood. Nearer in experience to the Trail of Tears than the promises of civilization and citizenship, many Indians from this generation view states less as potential partners for community empowerment than sources of Indian exploitation. Similarly, while those of her father's generation desire economic independence and political participation consistent with “the standards of living of the white people,” they possess limited, and often negative, experiences with non-Indian communities, business practices, political systems, and social norms (34). Though more open to “cooperation” than previous generations, segregation and wardship have left many in her father's generation similarly adrift without a coherent social philosophy or vocational infrastructure to replace the old ways and customs to which they often turn for security. Distanced from their grandparents' historical memory of brutality, and armed with more education, training and geographic

mobility than their parents, the present generation seems most equipped to succeed in an industrial and increasingly urban economy. Nevertheless, Bronson observes, they are still hampered by the effects of segregation. They often arrive in the city alone without a strong support system and lack access to continuing education, job training, adequate health care and other social services. Because they have been educated away from white students in boarding and mission schools, they share their parents' and grandparents' skepticism of white motivations. Consequently, they often enter the job market at the lowest levels and, unable to form productive relationships with non-Indian superiors and colleagues, stall out, eking out meager lives until they ultimately "become overwhelmed by increasing burdens and responsibilities" and, discouraged, return home (35).

Though the picture Bronson paints of Indian futures is bleak, she is careful to point out that her descriptions represent composites of a variety of experiences rather than universal "types" that define every community. For every despondent elder there is an optimist, for every adrift father a loving parent, and for every frustrated boarding school graduate a lawyer, doctor, teacher or entrepreneur. Such successes, however, are more to the credit of resolute individuals and self-reliant communities than government policies that encourage dependence, frustrate individual ambition, and engender suspicion among "our young people" (36). In a departure from the bootstrap rhetoric of the Haskell address four years earlier, Bronson here indicts policy, rather than a lack of Indian ambition, for contributing to the poverty, economic dependence, and social dysfunction that plagues many reservation communities. Lest her audience subscribe to

the popular notion that such issues are particular to Native communities, Bronson reminds them that "[t]here is nothing especially Indian in most of our problems … They are just human problems that all groups everywhere have to face" (36). What has given such issues a particularly "Indian" flavor is the "sheer stupidity" of segregation policies that prevent Indian peoples from experiencing and entering into the social, political and economic structure of the US as equals to their non-Indian counterparts (36).

At this point, Bronson targets federal paternalism and systematic efforts "toward destroying Indian family life and tearing down Indian family responsibility" through government-endorsed, forced educational programs like those forwarded by Richard Pratt at Carlisle and elsewhere. "Social workers have known for a long time that the conservation of the family is the basis of sound community life and progress," she writes:

> Yet in Indian education, up until the present [Hoover] administration, the whole tendency has been directed toward destroying Indian family life and tearing down Indian family responsibility … It has taken many costly years to prove the fallacy of such a program. Nobody knows how much this very thing can be held to be responsible for the present degeneration of many Indian families. (36)

The greatest crime perpetrated by current educational philosophies is not just that they impede the social and structural integration of Indian peoples as citizens into the US, but that, as a matter of policy, they fundamentally undermine the fabric of the Native family. Depriving parents and children "of their greatest means of growth and development," the

boarding schools sought to degrade Indian families themselves as a means of killing the Indian and saving the man (37). Rather than acting as a partner and adjunct to early familial socialization and parental authority, boarding schools assumed primary social and educational responsibilities that they neither understood nor were fully equipped to deliver. Looking to the government both for educational and familial accountability, Bronson reasons, Indian parents and students became estranged from one another, foreclosing opportunities for cross-generational education, exchange, and support.

Declaiming wardship a failure, Bronson argues that the restoration of proper Indian family relationships and the success of individual students ultimately depend upon equal treatment and equal access to educational, vocational, and other opportunities. "[O]ur great objective for the Indian" she argues, "must be exactly the same as it is in all social work for all other groups—to make him self-sustaining and independent, emotionally, economically, and socially. All our future policy must be shaped and controlled by this objective" (36). "If we are to achieve progress at all," she continues, "it must be through merging ourselves into the white life that surrounds us on all sides … We cannot exist separate and alone much longer. Our social contacts, our very economic existence will not permit it" (36, 37). With respect to Indian education, Bronson advocates the movement of Indian students from federally-operated, segregated boarding schools into state public schools. Allowing Indian children to attend schools locally would allow them to maintain significant cultural and familial relationships and thus, she reasoned, go a long way toward restoring healthy family relationships boarding schools

had undermined. Equal access to public education would also provide younger generations with the education, exposure, and familiarity with non-Indian communities and institutions that would allow them to succeed academically, personally and professionally alongside non-Indian colleagues and competitors. Such programs would lay the groundwork to allow Indian peoples to take full advantage of the social, political, and economic "privileges of citizenship" (37). Failure to act would mean nothing less than the continued social marginalization and economic deprivation of Native communities: "So long as our schools are segregated, so long as we feel that we do not need to keep in line with the state courses of study, so long as our laws are not the same as those of our white neighbors across the road, so long as our health standards and health advantages are not the same, so long as there are other special privileges given or denied us, then just so long will Indian progress be retarded, and just so long will there be an Indian problem to be solved" (38).

Despite the immediacy of the stakes—or perhaps because of them—Bronson cautions patience, however, noting that such reforms cannot be rushed into, but must proceed gradually and with careful thought toward allowing those affected to make the transition in as reasonable and efficient a manner possible. "We must not forget," she reminds her audience, "that it has taken five hundred years to destroy American Indian home life. We cannot restore it by an official order to abolish a government boarding school. There must be patient years of skilful [sic] work to rehabilitate what we in our stupidity have so ruthlessly torn down" (38). With cooperation between state and federal

agencies, reeducation in Indian communities, and extensive efforts to stamp out "serious and harmful prejudice against the Indian" in individual schools, cooperative reforms such as these have the potential, Bronson contends, to cultivate "mutual understanding and appreciation" between Indians and their non-Indian neighbors and to serve as a model for further cooperation and reform in the near future (39).

Compared to her earlier writings, "The Indians' Attitude Toward Cooperation" demonstrates significant shifts in Bronson's thinking and approach concerning Indian education as well as larger relationships between policy and community development. Most obvious is Bronson's refusal to speak authoritatively about or for all Indian peoples. She opens her paper, in fact, by cautioning her audience to "guard against every general statement about Indians" and admits that even her own identity as a Cherokee Indian woman provides her no "open sesame into the thinking and the philosophy of Indian peoples … I can only tell you what I know some Indians to be thinking and can only speak with authority about what I think myself" (32). While personal experience remains central to how she thinks about pressing Indian concerns, she no longer presents her individual experiences as representative of or universally achievable for all. This move suggests a more mature understanding of the potential dangers of speaking universally outside of Indian Country about Indian life, one undoubtedly influenced by her four year tenure negotiating the frustrating, inefficient and, at times, impenetrable workings of federal bureaucracy.

Gone also are the individualist assumptions and do-it-yourself language of the bootstrap ethic, replaced instead with a more historically-informed and institutionally-aware understanding of the myriad ways in which policy and paternalism conspire to to impede success at every turn. Though Bronson regrets what she views as a "philosophy of defeat" and victimization that organizes her grandmother's life, she also realizes that such responses have deep historical roots in traumatic experience (33). Denationalized by the federal government, dispossessed by racist policies and prejudicial courts, and alienated from traditional relationships and cultural practices, her grandmother "clings to the old ways and cherishes the old customs" not out of some chauvinistic, stubborn resistance to modernity, but because the promises of civilization and citizenship have failed her so completely (33). Likewise, while Bronson laments the pull that tradition exerts on those of her father's generation, it is neither "the old ways" nor laziness nor a failure of will that keeps them from succeeding as farmers, entrepreneurs or businessmen, but policies of segregation which prevent them from entering US social structures on equal footing with their non-Indian competitors. And it is not a lack of intelligence, ambition, or effort that leads Indian graduates from the cities back to the reservation in despair, but the abject failure of paternalistic policies, bankrupt educational philosophies, and absent social structures to provide them with the necessary tools and experience to succeed.

Though Bronson's confidence in individual ambition and personal responsibility remains, and though she clearly holds tradition and modernity in an uncomfortable

opposition, she no longer views the challenges facing Indian peoples strictly as a function of individual effort and persistence. Indeed, her appeal to the universal human character of the issues facing Indian communities rejects the presumed Indianness of such problems outright and redirects the conversation toward reform efforts which might best redress the systematic inequities and institutional prejudices that frustrate Indian achievement. As an employee of the BIA and a former teacher at Haskell, her repudiation of Indian educational philosophies, the boarding school model, and the principles of wardship upon which post-allotment Indian policies were based also stands in stark contrast to the confidence in federal policy reform projected in the Coolidge speech and to the presumed advantages of boarding school educations valorized in the Haskell address. If her plan to gradually dismantle the infrastructures of wardship as a mechanism to return more direct control over Native lives to Native people can be seen as a model for future reforms, what Bronson envisioned was no less than a complete overhaul of federal Indian policy and a shift in the BIA's mission from administration to education and from the micromanagement of individual Indian lives to the empowerment of self-determined Indian communities.

While she was still years away from openly advocating a return to the trust relationship between Indian peoples and the federal government and denouncing any attempt to undermine the unique political status of Indian nations, Bronson had already come to believe that any real solutions to the challenges facing Indian peoples were going to come from Indians and Indian communities themselves rather than from the halls of

Congress or offices of friends of the Indian organizations. Her continued work with the BIA under the impending New Deal reforms of the Collier administration and the increasingly intense calls for termination following the second World War would sharpen the stakes of her work and make visible the need for continuing protections against graft, corruption, and attacks against Indian lands, peoples, and communities.

From Structural Accommodation to Self-Determination

Four years into her appointment as Guidance and Placement Officer, Congress passed the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934, also known as the Wheeler-Howard Act. The brainchild of newly appointed BIA director John Collier, the IRA officially repudiated the policies of allotment and assimilation in favor of a corporate-inspired form of home-rule Indian self-governance. It stopped the allotment and liquidation of the tribal estate and provided for the reconsolidation of the tribal estate. Departing from the assimilationist paradigm of previous decades, it acknowledged the importance of group life for healthy communities and revalorized Indian cultural beliefs and practices as fundamental both for Indian policy reform and tribal self-determination. To foster economic independence, the IRA established tribally-controlled charters for economic enterprise, provided for independent contracts with state and municipal agencies, and set up a revolving credit fund to provide capital for investment. It also advocated hiring preferences for Indians in the Bureau, increased funding for educational and professional training, and shifted financial and political support away from boarding schools and

toward government-operated Indian day schools. Additionally, the IRA set up the Indian Arts and Crafts Board to encourage Native artists and protect the "authenticity" of Native art and strongly supported universal protections for Indian religious observances.[47] In its most significant and long-lasting reform, the IRA provided the theoretical framework to shift conceptualizations of Indian self-determination from a state-centered philosophy of delegated power to a human rights philosophy of inherent power.[48]

While the IRA failed to achieve universal support among tribal communities for a variety of reasons, not least of which was the insistence on BIA and Department of Interior oversight and control, a majority of Indian communities voted to reorganize under its measures.[49] As a consequence of its educational component, the Indian Scholarship and Loan Program saw its appropriations increased twenty fold to $250,000, though only $150,000 was actually distributed. The growth of the program spurred the Bureau to provide Bronson with a permanent assistant and stenographer and relocated her offices from Kansas City and Vinita to Washington, DC in 1935. Over the next eight years, she worked doggedly to promote higher education across Indian Country, extend the loan program to as many qualified students as possible, and continue culturally-sensitive reforms in Indian education philosophy and curriculum development. As the Bureau's sole Guidance and Placement Officer, she was also single-handedly tasked with screening loan applicants, tracking the progress of loan recipients, and securing employment for recent graduates. Such work required extensive travel, a fact of life compounded by her tireless participation in countless conferences, forums, and

symposiums concerning Indian education, health, and economic development. Her work paid huge dividends, as she reported, on the eve of the US entry into World War II in 1941, that over six hundred Native students had received support from the loan program during her tenure.

The following year, however, her offices were relocated to Chicago in order to make room for war-related agencies in DC. The move proved too challenging on her family life and Bronson submitted her resignation from the BIA effective November 1943, though she remained contracted as a consultant to the Office of Education for the next two years. In 1944, she joined the board of directors of the Indian Rights Association and authored a volume on Indian history and contemporary issues targeting high school age church groups sponsored by the Protestant Missionary Education Movement in New York City and published by the publishing arm of the National Council of Churches, the Friendship Press. Titled *Indians Are People Too*, the text, as Chad Allen argues, targets white Progressive Christians and mobilizes the discourses of civic, political, and Christian equality in order to make an argument for the unprejudiced inclusion of American Indians as citizens in US society.[50] At the same time, she was also a founding member and central actor in the National Congress of American Indians. The NCAI sought to protect the trust relationship with the federal government, achieve just and equitable settlements of tribal claims, gain civil protections for Indian peoples as dual citizens of the US and tribal communities, and cultivate positive public relations with non-Indians. These goals eventually coalesced into a more defined program of securing

rights and protections for Indian peoples, advocating self-determination for Indian communities, and opposing any effort to terminate entirely the trust relationship with the federal government.[51] As support for the IRA and Indian reform gave way to postwar conservatism and nativist calls to reduce federal bureaucracy and "liberate" American Indians from federal dependence by terminating the trust relationship, Bronson, operating as Executive Secretary for the NCAI, increasingly coupled her arguments for civic and political equality with those advocating for the protection of Indian treaty rights and opposition to termination policies that threatened them.

By the time Bronson was forty-seven, she assumed responsibility for virtually all of the NCAI's administrative duties. In addition to managing the organization's Legislative News Service and Legal Aid and Service Bureau and editing its monthly membership letter, *The Bulletin*, she also acted as host, lobbyist, advocate and point of entrée for tribal delegations visiting the capitol on business. She also took the lead on NCAI efforts to assist the Tlinglit and Haida peoples of Alaska in their opposition to industrial development in the Tongass National Forest and efforts by statehood advocates to quickly settle Indian legal claims and extinguish aboriginal title in the territory. Created in 1909, the Tongass National Forest encompassed over sixteen million acres of Native Alaskan lands, the claims to which remained undefined in both the Alaska Purchase of 1867 and the territorial Organic Act of 1884. From 1909 through 1934, Native Alaskans continually brought suit against the United States for infringing on their land rights. In somewhat of a compromise, provisions in the IRA and Alaska

Reorganization Act (1936) granted the Secretary of the Interior authority to create reservations from Tongass lands and hearings were scheduled to determine the extent and legitimacy of aboriginal land claims. Under pressure from paper and pulp interests, however, the claims remained non-adjudicated and little progress toward establishing protected reserves in Hydaburg, Barrow, and Shungnak occurred. Industrial and territorial interests then pushed the Tongass Timber Act of 1946 which granted the Secretaries of Agriculture and the Interior the authority to lease Native lands and conduct business without Native consent. Profits were to be deposited in escrow accounts until Native Alaskans could prove title to the land. As Thomas Cowger notes, the bill essentially "allowed Congress the authority to extinguish Native title" unilaterally, setting a dangerous precedent for more wide reaching legislation (59).

A series of proposed bills over the next two years sought to exempt commercial salmon traps and canning interests from reforms (S1446), rescind authority to establish reservations from the secretary of the interior (S162), settle Indian land claims by denying treaty, civil, and legal rights to Alaska Natives (HR7002), and transfer jurisdiction over Alaskan Native peoples from the federal to the territorial government (S2037). While the first three bills were either defeated or rescinded, the latter bill proved more difficult to oppose and led to more broadly construed legislation designed to abolish the Indian Claims Commission—the only extracongressional means for Indian communities to redress grievances against the federal government (S1737), extend state jurisdiction over all Indian peoples regardless of their consent (HR4725), and

“emancipate” “competent” Indians from federal wardship (HR1113). It was in this context that Bronson delivered the keynote address at the sixty-fourth annual convention of the Indian Rights Association on January 23, 1947, later published in the January-April edition of *The Indian Truth*.

“Shall We Repeat Indian History in Alaska?” levies scathing ethical indictments of collusion between the Alaskan territorial government, the BIA, and the fishing and timber industries and makes an emotional appeal to her Indian Rights Association audience to strongly oppose the Tongass Timber Act then under consideration. The stakes, as Bronson understood them, were grave. “If I were to choose one word to portray the spirit of the Indians of southeast Alaska,” she writes, “that word would have to be 'despair.' The Indians know they are standing with their backs to a wall, fighting a situation which they see clearly has a single, inevitable ending if help does not come to them soon. That ending is poverty—a property-less, marginal existence on the fringes of dependency so long as they survive as a race” (1). Despised by industrial and territorial interests because of their unique legal status and their claim to resource-rich homelands, they “are being pushed ruthlessly and inexorably lower and lower in the economic scale, not because they are less able, but because they are defenseless under discriminatory laws and practices” (2). In public they are popularly disparaged as racially inferior, hopelessly backward impediments to progress and dismissed as a vanishing race. In private they are ignored and betrayed by the institutions assigned to protect them. Unable to afford independent and capable legal council, they are forced to accept representation by BIA

lawyers whose primary allegiance is not to their Indigenous clients but to the federal government and a Department of Interior that more often than not had favorable relationships with the logging and timber companies dispossessing them in the first place. Connecting the graft, exploitation, and attempted dispossession of Indigenous lands by timber companies and political insiders to the nineteenth century dispossession of resource-rich Indian lands in the southeast, Bronson characterizes the Tlinglit and Haida struggle as the twentieth century moral equivalent of the nineteenth century removal crisis. Invoking Helen Hunt Jackson's indictment of graft, corruption, and hypocrisy, Bronson asks, "Will the decent people of the United States stand idle while another century of dishonor occurs in Alaska?" (2).

Having posed the question, Bronson introduces her audience to the peoples for whom she advocates, emphasizing their own Native industry and capacity to productively adapt non-Indian social, political and economic practices to their own advantage. Claiming southeastern Alaska as their home from time immemorial, the Tlinglit and Haida are hardly the anachronistic and backward savages of popular culture, but rather "a fiercely proud and highly competent people" (2). In addition to their unparalleled industry as fishermen, sailors and craftsmen, many also excel in school and go on to become doctors, lawyers, entrepreneurs and politicians. In fact, Bronson argues that long-held cultural emphases on trade and negotiation, competition, and accumulated personal wealth make southeastern Native Alaskans more adept to succeed and thrive in white society. Their adaptation of white organizational structures such as Native labor unions

and strong social organizations such as the Alaska Native Brotherhood and Alaska Native Sisterhood also provide support through difficult times and have emerged as strong political players in territorial politics and as strident protectors of Native Alaskan rights and claims. Given half a chance, Bronson claims, they "can make their own way and become a solid asset to any country" in addition to their own communities (4).

Unfortunately, all things are not equal and they at present "do not have that half chance" (4). In addition to business and political interests aligned against them, Tlinglit and Haida communities are also subject to intense institutional racism that permeates every aspect of territorial social and political life. Facing widespread discrimination and exclusion paralleling the Jim Crow South, some view their situation "in many respects no better than that of the Negro in the United States" (4). For Bronson, this is most tragically expressed by the pervasive anti-Indian racism of the territorial educational system. Plagued by prejudicial teachers and administrators, anti-Indian curriculum, and scant support from territorial legislators, both government and territorial schools undermine Native Alaskan self-confidence, self-respect and self-worth and fail entirely to deliver the tools necessary for them to succeed as fully-participating and productive citizens. As a result, many Native Alaskan youth were categorically rejecting their native heritage and attempting to pass as whites. "As I got deeper into the Alaska situation," Bronson recalls, "I came to understand this attempted repudiation was in reality a blind effort to escape from an intolerable position" (4). This position, inculcated through the schools, is compounded by blatant anti-Indian attitudes of territorial officials toward Native peoples

and governmental practices that strip Native Alaskans of resources and opportunities necessary to provide for themselves. Despite the fact that Native Alaskans pay taxes equal to their non-Indian neighbors, territorial officials continue to relegate the responsibility for Alaska Native education to the federal government. Conversely, federal agencies such as the Fish and Wildlife Service and Forest Service consistently privilege industrial fishing, timber, and trapping interests over those of Native communities and often fail to enforce regulations and protections already in place. Additionally, the Department of Interior and the BIA, under a new administration, suspended hearings to determine the extent of claims by Native Alaskans by right of aboriginal occupation, claims fundamental to the restoration of adequate land bases from which to derive a decent standard of living.

Together with industry-produced propaganda pitting Indian rights as antithetical to territorial interests, such measures all but guarantee the failure of "any move to accord justice to the Indians" (7). Bronson thus recommends a pragmatic, four-point plan which includes the solicitation of financial assistance to help secure independent legal council and fund court costs; oversight of the Forest Service, the Interior Department, and the BIA especially with respect to their relationships with big timber and other industries; legislative vigilance and opposition to any measures seeking to reduce Native land holdings; and public pressure by organizations like the IRA to reopen hearings and adjudicate Indigenous land claims. Only through public opposition to negative measures and open advocacy for Native land claims can organizations like the NCAI and IRA

fulfill their missions to protect and empower Native communities. “Here is a right before us that is immediate and urgent,” Bronson concludes, “To help in the winning of it will justify all the years of our existence as an organization to protect the rights of a defenseless minority, and it will help to keep our national honor clean. We cannot ignore this responsibility” (9).

Harsher in tone and more critical of BIA corruption and institutional racism than anything before it, ““Shall We Repeat Indian History in Alaska” is Bronson's most comprehensive and critical treatment of federal Indian policy and its effects on Native peoples. Similar to her earlier writings, Bronson establishes the historical and legal primacy of aboriginal claims to the region and undermines arguments against trust relationships and protections for Native communities as nothing more than rationales for racial discrimination and self-interest. She also mobilizes the language of civic and political equality alongside historical parallels to nineteenth century removals to bolster a moral argument against government corruption, industrial exploitation, and racial prejudice. As in “Cooperation,” discourses of Christian charity and moral equity are conspicuously absent, reflective perhaps of a developing commitment to structural and political reform in what was quickly becoming an openly hostile political climate. Bronson thus continues to move away from the abstract pan-Indian generalizations that dominated her early writings and toward more pragmatic and non-sectarian questions of policy, activism and advocacy as they affect specific tribal communities.

While the critical and immediate tone reflects an antagonistic political climate, it is also the result of Bronson's extensive travels across Native Alaska in which she spent countless hours interviewing Tlinglit and Haida community members, listening to personal stories, and coordinating legal strategies and media campaigns to support the effort. In much the same way that Bronson's personal experiences and relationships affected how she thought about the connection between policy and healthy Indian communities, her extensive first-hand experience over eight weeks in Tlinglit and Haida communities seems to have had a similar effect. Just as social segregation and economic marginalization became "facts" of life for her grandmother, father and former students, so poverty and dependence were quickly becoming the norm for Tlinglit and Haida communities. However, rather than signaling some racially-determined inability to reconcile with modernity, Bronson locates such problems in comprehensive failures of political and social structures. What social dysfunction or economic degradation exists, Bronson demonstrates, has less to do with the historically resilient and highly adaptable Native Alaskans than with systematic land dispossession, government privilege of industrial interests over Indigenous occupancy rights, inequitable legal treatment, and prejudicial educational systems. As in "Cooperation," Bronson continues to move the discussion of the economic, social and political issues facing Native Alaskan communities further toward explicit critiques of institutional inequity and racial prejudice and discrimination. Reflective of her early short stories, she also exposes the moral

failure of government agencies to protect the vulnerable against powerful interests intent on securing Tlinglit and Haida lands and resources.

Bronson no longer presumes the easy and problem-free integration of Native peoples into US and state social and economic orders as individual citizens. Where she previously emphasized caution with respect to global policy reforms of wardship, she now advocates continued, if not intensified, protections for Native Alaskans. Perhaps as a consequence of the real threats to their survival and way of life, and reflecting the NCAI's commitment to collective tribal rights and protection of the trust status, Bronson here assumes the survival of Tlinglit and Haida communities "as a race" as a starting point for any discussion of reform and political action. In a departure from her earlier work, she seeks Indian community survival as a desired *end* of policy rather than evidence of policy failure. Indian survivals become in this essay a viable and worthwhile goal not only of policy but also of political activism and advocacy of non-Indian allied groups like the Indian Rights Association. Considering that absolute assimilation had long been the goal of such organizations, and while most still presumed it to be a worthwhile endeavor, Bronson's defense of Indian survivals as both Indians and US citizens constitutes a significant challenge to such positions. The central issue, in this context, becomes not how best to ease Native Alaskans' transition into the Alaskan territorial structure but how best to protect their Indigenous claims to land, resource management, and community self-determination as a fundamental component of that transition. Without such protections—all of which are consequences of human action and, as Bronson suggests,

moral imperatives of any democratic society—poverty, dependency and despair are all but inevitable. In the aftermath of the second World War and the emergence of human rights discourse, Bronson rightly situates the Tongass crisis as not simply an "Indian" problem but a fundamental human rights issue as well. In this essay, the move from a politics of individual determination to one of collective and community self-determination is complete. Indeed, by 1947, Bronson had come to understand that individual success and community health were inextricably linked to the continued protections embedded in the trust status, and that no real form of self-determination could exist absent those protections.

Despite numerous trips to Alaska and massive publicity and lobbying campaigns across Indian Country and the United States, the Tongass Bill became law in August of 1947.[52] As many feared, this "victory" over tribal interests set off a conservative fury bent upon dissolving the trust relationship and finally getting the federal government out of the Indian business. Fueled by a postwar shift in liberalism from cultural pluralism to minority assimilation and a backlash against government expenditures and bureaucratic excess, a consortium of conservative social and political interests began advocating the "emancipation" and "liberation" of Native peoples through a "withdrawal" of "government control." The Zimmerman Report of 1947 forwarded a three-tiered system by which to evaluate which tribal nations were deemed best prepared to enter mainstream society, set out a calendar for termination, and recommended a program to prepare other nations for the same. The next year, Congress, informed by a similar desire to assimilate

Native peoples, extended the state of New York unprecedented civil and criminal jurisdiction over the remaining Haudenosaunee nations. A year later, the Hoover Commission, charged with identifying areas to reduce government expenditures, produced a divided recommendation that states assume social and economic responsibility for Native peoples from the federal government. A series of laws passed in 1953 began this transfer, and by the end of the year both houses of Congress introduced termination legislation—the now-infamous HCR 108 and PL280—designed explicitly to end the trust relationship with Native peoples, abolish the BIA, and extend state jurisdiction over Indian individuals and lands.[53] Over roughly the next twenty years, more than 1,356,801 acres of the Indian estate and an estimated 13,263 Indians were directly affected by termination.[54]

Opinion in Indian Country varied widely about the proposed measures. On the one hand, most Indians believed that excessive bureaucratic controls hampered economic development in reservation communities, restricted self-determination, and encouraged institutional discrimination against Native peoples. Recalling Bronson's speech at the National Conference on Social Work, they also felt that states might better and more efficiently administer social services like health care and public education. On the other hand, many Indians feared that an absence of trust protections would result in the further erosion of the tribal estate, loss of social programs like housing and welfare, incursions into tribal sovereignty, and retreat from gains made through the IRA. While some communities resisted termination outright, others subscribed to its basic tenets provided

that Indians retain the right of consultation and consent and that measures be implemented to assist Native communities in the transition and to ensure their health and security in the interim.[55] The unilateral and coercive measures contained in HCR 108 and PL 280 and passed by Congress revealed any semblance of partnership as a ruse. According to NCAI leadership, forced termination "would end federal services without insuring they would be provided by the states; cut off tribal funds, liquidate tribal property; abolish federal protection of Indian land and potentially lead to loss of Indian trust property" (Cowger 112). Their fears proved correct as by January of the next year twelve termination bills were introduced and debated in Congress affecting tribal nations in New York, California, Florida, and Texas as well as individual tribal communities in other parts of the country.[56] As momentum for unilateral termination policies gained in Congress, Bronson, the NCAI, and a wide field of Native and non-Native advocacy groups publicly opposed any measure that advocated "withdrawl," "emancipation," or "termination" without tribal consent, and vigilantly challenged any effort to evacuate the tribal estate, abdicate the trust relationship with the federal government, and deny tribal treaty rights.

Bronson's experiences advocating Tlinglit and Haida trust rights in Alaska and opposing coercive termination in any form afforded her keen insight into the continued significance of tribal sovereignty and trust protections for the health and security of Indigenous communities. Where she had once presumed Native assimilation into American society, she now cultivated a developing commitment to the maintenance of

tribal sovereignty. This move is evident in a letter penned in 1955 in which she intensely criticizes the policies of termination and relocation endorsed by the 83rd Congress.[57] More confrontational even than her critique of the prejudicial and exploitative conditions in Alaska, Bronson utilizes a rhetorical ploy evident in her earliest writings: appealing to the common sense of the "average American" as a veiled means of indicting them for their uninformed ignorance and moral apathy regarding federal Indian policy (Bronson, "Termination").

Bronson notes that "average Americans" possess two qualities that influence how they think and act toward Native peoples: "sympathy with the underdog" in general and a "romantic sentiment for the American Indian." The latter, she argues, is rooted in a "vague sense of guilt for the actions of his forebears in ousting the original inhabitants of the rich land they adopted and for the long and shameful history of broken treaties with these dispossessed" leading *most* Americans into the respectable "tendency toward impulsive action based on a desire to make amends." However, action based on "superficial or inaccurate" misinformation both of the conditions in Native America and of the desires, aspirations, and goals of Native peoples themselves, leads to destructive measures like termination and relocation which "jeopardize the Indian's very existence and unquestionably would lead to his eventual—literal—extinction" (Bronson, "Termination"). In a relatively deft rhetorical move, Bronson invokes the language of moral compliment and American idealism – the well-intentioned desire of Americans to root for the underdog – in order to disarm her non-Indian audience before challenging

sympathetic and unsympathetic readers alike to identify on which side of the moral fence their attitudes toward Indian peoples rest.

After posing the question, Bronson then issues into a litany of logical arguments that at once point to the hypocrisy of the rhetoric of benevolence inherent in termination discourse as well as its incompatibility with both American idealism and with international treaty law. She first points out that trusteeship is not a function of federal benevolence, but, rather, the result of Native cessions of land outlined in peace treaties between sovereign nations. Rejecting arguments that the trust relationship between Indian nations and the federal government frustrates Indian self-determination and economic independence—a position that Bronson and many other Indian intellectuals argued early in the century—she points to the special "status" and "preferential treatment" given to other demographic groups and economic interests expressly for the purposes of empowering them politically and economically. "[I]t would seem to be our established political philosophy," Bronson comments, "that the economic well-being of particular groups is a legitimate concern of the Federal government—all this aside from the fact that, in the case of the Indians, it is a matter of solemn treaty" (Bronson, "Termination"). Bronson then notes that current efforts moving toward termination are a complete abrogation of the agreements entered upon between Native peoples and the federal government in the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934, which not only "affirmed the partnership of Indian tribes and the federal government" but also provided Indians the "right to exist as distinct communities, with their own properties, culture, and religion,

and the promise of certain services to be furnished by the Federal Government normally furnished [to] other citizens by the states" (Bronson, "Termination"). Termination policy, Bronson argues, would effectively put an end to this relationship and, rather than bringing about the "independence" of Native peoples from federal dependency, would actually undermine efforts to address many of the material issues affecting Native communities.

Having exposed the motivations behind termination as a not-so-veiled recycling of allotment and assimilation rhetoric from sixty years earlier, Bronson's most powerful critique of termination occurs in her final comments concerning Indian cultural integrity and political autonomy: "Maintenance of the tribal integrity … must be assured in any program looking toward their future healthy integration into the American way of life" (Bronson, "Termination"). The distinction that she makes here between assimilation and integration is central in understanding the arc of Bronson's work, activism, and politics, as well others following the dissolution of the Society of American Indians in the 20s and preceding the formation of the National Indian Youth Council in the early 60s. If assimilation can be broadly defined as the complete absorption of one people into the cultural, political, and economic lifeways of another, nowhere, and this can't be stressed enough, does Bronson argue that the prosperity and survivance of Native peoples is predicated on the political detribalization and cultural absorption of Native communities. While various degrees of acculturation—generally in the context of religion, education, political empowerment and economic opportunity—may strengthen the ability of Native communities to address contemporary challenges, the central problems facing Native

peoples, as Bronson came to understand it, was not cultural but structural and political. She is not arguing, in the end, for the assimilation of Native people; her insistence on the "Maintenance of tribal integrity" is up neither for debate nor accommodation. Rather, this singular goal, and only this singular goal, should, she argues, be the basis of any program or legislative policy designed with at least the stated intention of "bettering" Indian communities.

While Bronson never dispensed with her faith in hard work, determination, self-reliance and the ethical basis of Christianity, her experiences as an official in the BIA and the political battles she fought while at the NCAI forced her to develop a more nuanced understanding of the social, political and institutional forces that impact the health, security and prosperity of Indian communities. Consequently, she moved consistently toward a collective politics of self-determination capable of accommodating acculturation while maintaining trust protections and self-government for Native peoples. When read within the larger context of American Indian political activism, Bronson's later work reveals less a woman representative of a politics with which later pan-Indian nationalists necessarily had to break, than the formation of the very consciousness they would draw upon in years to come.

From the Local to the Global and Back Again

Tiring of the internal strife, posturing, and "politicking" that had begun to define Indian politics, Bronson attended her last NCAI conference in Omaha in September of

1954 (Harvey 196). Though she remained peripherally involved in the organization, she resigned finally from all positions in 1956 at the age of fifty-nine and left Washington entirely the next year in order to assume a position as Health Education Specialist for the newly-created Indian Health Service at San Carlos, Arizona. Over the next five years, Bronson worked with the tribal council and community members to modernize tribal health practices that respected and complemented traditional forms of healing, form a community advisory committee for IHS employees residing on the reservation, bring sanitary plumbing to thirty-five Apache homes, and foster social and political organization and community solidarity among San Carlos Apache women. Toward this latter effort, Bronson encouraged women to assume responsibilities related to community health education and infant care and mortality previously claimed by the federal government. In October of 1958, eleven Apache women formed the Ee-Cho-Da-Nihi ("helpers") hospital auxiliary which provided translation services for IHS nurses, promoted immunization campaigns locally, and acted as liaisons between IHS doctors and their communities. Two years later, the Ee-Cho-Da-Nihi expanded its efforts by instituting a summer outreach program for twenty-two Apache girls during which they helped renovate two houses of elderly Apache tribal members while also earning money for clothes and schools supplies for the fall semester. The program was expanded the following year as over thirty Apache girls renovated six houses over a single summer. For her work with these and many other projects at San Carlos, Bronson was awarded the

Oveda Culp Hobby Award in 1962, the highest honor conferred by the Department of Health, Education and Welfare.

In 1964, Bronson once again retired from government service and relocated with her husband to Tucson, Arizona. Retirement life was not in her constitution, however, and she went to work almost immediately as a field representative for Save the Children's American Indian Program. Within a year, she assumed a position as program director for the southern Arizona region in which she continued to build upon the grass roots organizing strategies and community-centered programs for self-determination developed at San Carlos. Her program to form Indian community volunteer committees that would define needs, propose programs, solicit financial assistance and distribute community development funds directly was adopted as the SCF's national model in all its interactions with Indian communities (236). Such work at the Tohono O'odham reservation south of Tucson allowed the community to construct and repair pasture fences, restore water wells, establish summer ranching education and training programs for teenage boys, and construct a modern community meeting house. Though outside observers often criticized volunteer committees and community educational programs as slow and inefficient, Bronson consistently defended them as crucial components for Indian community and economic development.

While Bronson drastically reduced her workload following the death of her husband in 1966, she continued to encourage Indian grass roots activism and oppose federal paternalism in any form as inimical to Indian self-sufficiency and self-

determination. The organization she helped to found and keep afloat in its tenuous early years recognized her long service on behalf of Indian communities by awarding her an NCAI citation of merit award at its twenty-fifth anniversary convention in 1969. In 1970, at the age of seventy-two, she attended her last national conference on Indian affairs. Though a stroke suffered two years later severely restricted her activism, Indian issues and affairs would remain close to her heart until her death on June 12, 1982 at the age of eighty-four.

Despite a lifelong dedication to Indian issues and her commitments to the trust relationship, tribal integrity, and self-determination developed later in her life, she remains a marginal figure in twentieth century Indian politics. Thus far critical attention to her life and work has been restricted to a roughly twenty year period between her arrival as an instructor at Haskell in 1926 and the publication of *Indians Are People Too* eighteen years later. Only Harvey's unpublished dissertation and Timothy Cowger's history of the NCAI treat Bronson's life, politics and writings before and after these periods. This arbitrary bracketing might be partially explained as a consequence of accessibility. Most of her work is contained in archives, on hard to find microfiche sources, or in non-lending special collections scattered throughout the country. As a consequence, the massive recovery efforts that have reintroduced work by Samson Occom, Joseph Johnson, William Apess, Pauline Johnson, Alice Callahan, Mourning Dove, Ella Deloria, John Joseph Mathews, Todd Downing, and others from this understudied period have yet to catch up to Bronson. My work, I hope, will encourage the

archival efforts necessary to bring her work to a wider audience and to invigorate critical interest in this significant figure in Indian political activism.

That scholars are only now beginning to attend to the politics of early twentieth century Indian cultural production signals a more acute problem in Native Studies which continues to impede attention to figures like Bronson: contemporary critical prejudices against what many perceive to be assimilationist or overly accommodationist political tendencies. Put simply, a field defined by post-Red Power militancy and a nationalist politics of sovereignty and self-determination is hesitant to recover, much less engage, writers and periods that fail to conform to contemporary critical and political preferences. Those that do generally hedge their discussions by situating Native writers from this era exclusively as figures of cultural mediation and political accommodation. While such work has been crucial to the recovery of previously neglected writers and for initiating critical discussions of their work, critical frames that emphasize mediation, assimilation, and accommodation exclusively have the power to define contemporary understandings of the period and, in many ways, delimit the parameters of future work. Thus, while it is important to identify the strategies and methods by which Indian writers, intellectuals and activists "talk back to civilization" in defined historical moments, it is also important to understand how those strategies, methods, and political philosophies necessarily shifted over time in response to radically changing conditions. By also considering what Indian writers had to say about themselves and other Indians as well as white America, we can better appreciate how previous generations wrote or spoke back to white America *and*

how they wrote, spoke, organized, lobbied, protested, fought, sang, and danced to and for one another. Effecting this critical shift will enrich future recovery projects and critical dialogs not only by gifting writers like Bronson with the comprehensive and nuanced treatments they deserve but also by fostering a respectful critical space in which to honestly consider how such work might inform issues facing tribal nations today.

As a Cherokee citizen-scholar, I am compelled by Bronson both as a person and as an activist-intellectual. In a climate where we often hear that Native scholars should put their money—and their bodies—where their mouths are, Bronson did just that for over fifty years of her life. Her work doesn't always sound like we'd like it to and many of the political positions and critical solutions she puts forward will likely strike contemporary ears as naïve or shortsighted. But she never quit trying to understand her times and how best to put her own individual strengths and resources to work for the Indian students, organizations, and communities she loved. If that meant striking strategic accommodations with federal policies, intervening where she could in assimilationist curriculum development and educational reform, or reaching out to non-Indian allies for financial and political support she was willing to do so, provided that such choices worked for rather than against Indian people. Though cultivating lifelong relationships with non-Indian religious and political organizations capable of influencing Indian affairs, she insisted always that they consult with Indian communities and develop political platforms geared toward the goals, needs, and desires of those communities. And while willing to play the role of mediator, educator, and collegial spokesperson, Bronson

was also capable of levying scathing indictments against hypocrisy, racism, prejudice, and institutional oppression. Accommodation, then, was less a defined politics than a diplomatic strategy predicated on respectful exchange and equanimity.

Though she preferred the white path of peace, respect, negotiation, and accommodation, Bronson proved time and again that she was more than willing to march on the red path of opposition and resistance when circumstances demanded it. In these ways, Bronson is not so different from that Cherokee girl from Adair County with the "funny" name who, decades later, would travel from her Cherokee home across the continent and into political consciousness before returning to a life of service to her People. Though the arc of Bronson's life increasingly took her away from the landscapes and scenes of her youth, like Mankiller she carried her home, history, and fierce pride of nation and heritage with her wherever she traveled. That her work was largely targeted at Indian communities outside of the Cherokee Nation should be no surprise to those familiar with Cherokee history. Diplomacy and tribal-international cultural and political exchange are as deeply embedded in Cherokee political traditions as are nationalist defenses of borders and boundaries. In fact, diplomacy is a crucial means by which national communities substantiate claims to political and cultural autonomy and gain recognition as members of a larger international community. Bronson's and Mankiller's negotiations with other tribal nations, the federal government, and numerous non-Indian allied individuals and groups might legitimately be read, within their own historical contexts, as diplomatic expressions of Cherokee national identity. Though working within

radically different historical circumstances—Bronson's defined by tribal dissolution and termination, Mankiller's by tribal reorganization and self-determination—their lives thus suggest an understanding of the politics of recognition which views performing one's cultural and political identity outside of her national home as a fundamental component of strengthening national efforts toward self-determination.

That Bronson worked in an era absent a recognized Cherokee government makes her life and accomplishments all the more remarkable. For, like all Cherokees from her generation, nationhood persisted not through the political and administrative mechanism of the Cherokee state, but through the lives they lived, the stories they told, and the relationships they maintained with one another, other Indian peoples, and the non-Indian world. Nationhood survived because Cherokees like Bronson and countless others who will never find their way into the history books refused to let it pass quietly away. For that they deserve our attention, honor and respect. When looking back on the tenuous early years of the NCAI, former president John Ranier noted that Bronson "was like Washington and Jefferson for us" (Cowger 37). I hope that through this and subsequent studies she finds her rightful place alongside Nanye'hi, John Ross and Wilma Mankiller as well.

Notes

1 See for example *Reinventing the Enemy's Language* (1997), *The Reader's Companion to US Women's History* (1999), *The Fire This Time: Young Activists and the New Feminism* (2001), *Every Day is a Good Day: Reflections by Contemporary Indigenous Women* (2004), *Reflections on American Indian History: Honoring the Past, Building a Future* (2008).

2 Gretchen Harvey, *Cherokee and American: Ruth Muskrat Muskrat, 1897-1982*, Arizona State University, 1996; Anne Ruggles Gere, "Indian Heart/White Man's Head: Native-American Teachers in Indian Schools, 1880-1930," in *History of Education Quarterly* 45.1: 38–65; Timothy Cowger, *The National Congress of American Indians: The Founding Years,* U of Nebraska P, 1999; Chadwick Allen, *Blood Narrative: Indigenous Identity in American Indian and Maori Literary and Activist Texts*, Duke UP, 2002, esp. pp. 76-78. Harvey's study remains the foundational biographical source on Muskrat's life and work and is invaluable for its documentation of the numerous archives where her editorials and professional and personal correspondences are located.

3 Chadwick Allen's contention that Muskrat Bronson's accommodationist tone "evacuates native indigeneity of its implications of radical difference and separatism that might disturb White Christians" and in doing so "undercuts the activist potential" of the text is representative (82, 83). Though the text might well foreground arguments for Christian—and thus civic and political—equality at the expense of racial or cultural difference, it does so in service of securing support for the broader *activist* goals of improving Indian education, economic and community development, and health services as well as historicizing Indian claims against the federal government for audiences who, influenced by the rise of post-war nativism, would likely be threatened by too heavy an emphasis on difference. Allen thus seems to have mistaken the *rhetorical* politics of the text for the actual social and political goals it forwards. Though Muskrat, like many of her generation, unquestionably believed that Indians would ultimately be "absorbed" into the US body politic as individual citizens, nowhere does she assume that they would do so as anything other than Indians. She only demanded that as Indian-Americans they be afforded the same opportunities, rights, privileges and protections as other citizens.

4 For Indian Cherokee nationalist resistance movements to allotment, see Thomas's "The Origins of the Redbird Smith Movement" (1953), Starr 479-87, and Holm *Great* 32-33. For Posey's conflicts with Creek Snakes, see Sivils "Introduction" 1-98.

5 Though the Curtis Act of 1898 severely eroded Cherokee political authority, the national council continued to manage internal national affairs until the Oklahoma Act of Union in 1907.

6 Both the original female and male seminaries were destroyed by fire in 1887 and 1910, respectively. While the female seminary was reconstructed and reopened in its present location in 1889, the male seminary was never rebuilt. For general histories of the seminaries see Skelton (1970), Fry (1988), Mihesuah (1993), and Szasz, "Through" (2006).

7 Mihesuah, 3, 84, 102-03; Szasz *Education* 191-92, 211.

8 OIT was accredited by the North Central Association of Colleges and Universities in 1948, and in 1965 was renamed Northern Oklahoma College. http://www.north-ok.edu/history-of-noc.

9 For the full text of the following selections, see Appendix.

10 I do not mean to suggest that Bronson's experience at OIT paralleled that of Indian students who attended, or were forced to attend, government schools such as Hampton, Carlisle, Haskell, and Chillocco. Because OIT was a voluntary institute open to all Oklahomans, and thus did not share the explicit assimilationist imperatives of these schools, Muskrat likely didn't experience the blatant anti-Indianism that defined the curriculum, pedagogy, and cultural attitudes of many of the federal boarding schools.

11 For contemporary accounts of homesickeness and trauma, see Gertrude Bonnin's "School Days of an Indian Girl" from *American Indian Stories* and Eastman's *From the Deep Woods to Civilization* 14-51. For critical studies of the boarding school experience generally, see Lomawaima (1994), Adams (1995), Szasz (1999), and Trafzer (2006).

12 Harvey positions Bronson's bi-cultural heritage as "an enriching rather than a degenerative experience" that proved formative for her "political position that Indigenous Americans could possess more than one identity, that they could choose to be both Indian and American" (2). While I appreciate Harvey's argument, I am here attempted to situate Bronson specifically as a Cherokee who also happened to be an American.

13 Farming and ranching were incorporated into Cherokee lifeways from at least the early nineteenth century as part of the federal government's civilization project. Ranching particularly became a huge industry in the northern districts of the Cherokee Nation. In addition to Will Rogers's father, Clem, both Riggs's and Oskison's fathers were successful ranchers in Claremore and Vinita, respectively. Bronson's father operated a moderate-sized farm near Grove. See Iverson 25-86, McLoughlin, "After" 112-116, 297-98. See also Riggs's *Green Grow the Lilacs* and Oskison's short stories and frontier romances.

14 Where Ned Christie is ultimately assassinated in the assault on his home, Oskison's Ned Warrior survives and goes on to coordinate the defeat of the very interests that Christie opposed throughout his life. Cherokee writer Robert Conley's 1991 novel *Ned Christie's War* also celebrates Christie as a Cherokee patriot and resistance fighter.

15 This rhetorical device is common across Native writing from at least William Apess's defense of Mashpee land rights and counterhistory of King Philip's War. Within Cherokee writing, critiques of imperialism, civilized hypocrisy and moral bankruptcy are evident in early petitions from Cherokee women to federal officials and memorials protesting removal to John Rollin Ridge's scathing critique of US imperial expansion in *Joaquin Murieta, the Celebrated California Bandit* and late nineteenth century public relations and lobbying efforts by Cherokee politicians and businessmen to resist territorialization, corporate incursions, and, later, allotment and statehood. To this point, Denson writes that following removal Cherokee political elites appropriated civilized discourse "continually called attention to the contradictory nature of American Indian policy. They picked apart American efforts to disavow racism and oppression and insisted that if the Cherokees were to be dispossessed of their government and property it would be a crime and not the working out of some universal principle" of evolutionary determinism (10). See also Hoxie, "Exploring" 980.

16 According to Harvey, these lectures were delivered domestically in Norman, Denver, Colorado Springs, San Francisco, and Hawaii, and internationally in Manchuria, Japan, Korea, and Hong Kong.

17 Aligned with their rhetorical assaults on civilized discourse, Native writing also has a long history critiquing the gulf between Christian values and political practice from Samson Occom forward. Cherokees mobilized this strategy throughout the removal crisis of the 1820s and 30s while both Harvey and C. Allen identify it as one of Bronson's central rhetorical moves. See Denson 10-51, Harvey 45, C. Allen 83.

18 Ruth Muskrat, "The Serpent," *Mount Holyoke Monthly* 33 (March 1925): 160-8.

19 See Hertzberg 1-180; Holm 58-60; Cornell 115-18, 391; Hoxie, "Exploring" 992. For a study of how Native intellectuals and reformers negotiated late nineteenth and early twentieth century discourses of race, reform, citizenship, and progress and mediated their experiences to non-Indian audiences, see Maddox (2006).

20 The Omnibus Act defined the mission of the Office of Indian Affairs as strictly administrative in nature and attempted to consolidate thirty years of amendments and revisions to the General Allotment Act. Among other things, the OIA was authorized to adjudicate allotment estates, cancel trust patents, and manage leases and contracts for

reservation natural resources. In doing so, the Omnibus Act "strengthened [BIA] powers over Indian lives and property immeasurably" (Deloria & Lytle, *Nations* 34-38).

21 Supreme court decisions incorporating Pueblo Spanish land grants into federal trust and upholding the trust relationship of Indian peoples with the federal government prevented states from unilaterally evacuating Indian land titles and taxing allotments. Despite widespread support from progressivist "friends of the Indian" and Christian temperance organizations, the SAI and other allies defeated efforts to criminalize the use of peyote in Native spiritual practices by mounting a strong argument that it infringed on constitutional protections for religious freedom. Deloria and Lytle, *Nations* 32-39.

22 Holm *Great* xiii-xv.

23 Holm *Great* 15, 53).

24 Ibid 40-42.

25 Ibid 42-43.

26 Harvey 52.

27 According to documentation, the speech has no official title, although Harvey notes it was modeled on a chapter from Lindquist's book entitled "Indian Leadership, Past and Present." The *Mount Holyoke Alumni Quarterly* reported on the speech a year later and an article entitled, "Ruth's Speech to President Coolidge, December 13, 1923." For the purposes of citation and identification, I have adopted Linquist's title for Bronson's speech.

28 I take this phrase from Frederick Hoxie's volume, *Talking Back to Civilization: Indian Voices from the Progressive Era* (2001). See also Denson 10-51.

29 While some, such as the Society of American Indians, viewed citizenship as providing much needed constitutional protections for Indian individuals, others viewed it as yet another federally-imposed infringement upon the trust relationship of Native nations. See Hertzberg, Hoxie and Bruyneel.

30 For studies that examine the intersection of American nationalist identity and discourses/images of American Indians, see Pearce (1988), Berkhofer (1978), Deloria (1998), and Huhndorf (2001).

31 Warrior, *People* 181-185.

32 Mihesuah, *Indigenous* xvi.

33 Though originally the Cherokee Female Seminary, Northeastern State Teacher's College (now Northeastern State University) was incorporated into the Oklahoma state college system in 1909 and opened to all citizens of the state. By the time of Bronson's arrival, then, she was likely serving both Indian and non-Indian students.

34 To this point, Muskrat used funds from a post-graduate scholarship awarded by Mount Holyoke to send a Laguna Pueblo Haskell student, Verna Nori, to Mount Holyoke. Upon her graduation in 1932, Nori worked as administrator of a government day school in Santo Domingo Pueblo until her early death in 1939. Later that year, Muskrat gained permission from the Laguna Pueblo tribal council to adopt Nori's infant daughter, Dolores. Perhaps inspired by Nori's success and to honor the memory of her friend, Muskrat set up a personal loan account for Indian students administered through the YWCA comprised of honorariums she received as well as any donations she was able to acquire. Harvey 69.

35 For an explanation of this progressive antagonism to tribalism, see Cornell 115-16 and Hertzberg. For a refutation of this position see McNickle (1973/1977).

36 Lomawaima 99-122; Wallace, “Beyond” 35-57.

37 Wallace, ibid.

38 Lomawaima 98-99; Wallace, “Beyond” 56-7.

39 Montezuma was arguably the most vociferous opponent of federal paternalism. Born *Wassaja* to Yavapai parents, Montezuma was captured by Pima warriors and ransomed to an itinerant photographer named Carlos Gentile, who eventually placed the boy in the care of a Baptist minister in Illinois. Attaining degrees in chemistry and medicine from the University of Illinois and Chicago Medical College, Montezuma served as physician and medical officer at Carlisle Industrial Academy, where he developed a great respect and lifelong friendship with Richard Henry Pratt, the architect of late-nineteenth century Indian education policy and the boarding school apparatus. Increasingly troubled by what he viewed as the disabling paternalism and corrupt self-interest of federal Indian bureaucracies, Montezuma came to believe that the only way Indian peoples might survive and succeed in the modern world was to “free ourselves” from confinement on reservations and the restrictive oversight of the Indian Bureau, accept US citizenship, and enter into the larger US body politic. As long as the federal government continued to treat Indians as dependent wards, incapable of managing their own affairs or making choices

for themselves, they would remain dependent and open to further graft and exploitation.

40 Hoxie, “Introduction” 39.

41 Conceived primarily as a means to keep students isolated from their home communities and prepare them for domestic work, the program had come under heavy criticism following the release of the Meriam Report in February of 1928 Muskrat attempted to reform the program by carefully screening and selecting Outing sponsors and explicitly seeking opportunities outside of domestic labor. Despite her efforts, most student participants of the Outing Program ended up working as domestic servants in and around Kansas City, a pattern which caused Muskrat great consternation. Harvey 69-71.

42 Charles Rhoads and Henry Scattergood were appointed by Hoover as Commissioner and Assistant Commissioner of Indian Affairs, respectively. Both Quakers with a strong record as humanitarians, they immediately began instituting reforms to the BIA, mostly directed at educational reform. Under their administration appropriations for the American Indian Higher Education fund increased dramatically, boarding school curriculum shifted its emphasis from vocational to professional and higher academic focuses, and the Outing Program was reformed and brought under the Guidance and Placement Division. They came under attach by figures like John Collier of the American Indian Defense Association for not acting swiftly and comprehensively enough. In 1933, Collier would take over as BIA Commissioner. Harvey 77-82.

43 Ibid 80.

44 Ibid 88.

45 Bronson's comprehensive policy called for procedures to more quickly and efficiently facilitate disbursements, removing agency superintendents from the process entirely; culturally-sensitive curriculum development and greater academic standards; increased educational opportunities for Indian students; economic protections for loan recipients; and mentor programs designed to help students adjust to life away from their communities and cope with anti-Indian racism from the public sector. Ibid 88-94.

46 While the Citizenship Act brought such issues back into the spotlight, they actually had their origins in allotment policies of the previous three decades. Formerly considered domestic dependent *nations* with a unique trust relationship to the United States, allotment dissolved tribal governments and legal institutions, terminated the collective ownership of the tribal estate, and opened up “excess” lands to non-Indian settlement. Citizens of Indian nations were theoretically to be transformed into citizens of the US and of the respective states in which their former estates rested.

47 Hertzberg 288.

48 Deloria and Lytle 188.

49 Ninety-three tribal governments reorganized under the provisions of the IRA between 1935-45. The Oklahoma Indian Welfare Act of 1936 extended the IRA to Oklahoma tribes previously excluded from its measures. While the Cherokee Nation refused to reorganize under this measure, the United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians did.

50 C. Allen 81-83.

51 Cowger 9-10.

52 With the assistance of the NCAI, the Alaska Native Brotherhood and Sisterhood, the Indian Rights Association and the Confederated Association of Women's Clubs, Tlinglit and Haida communities immediately filed suit with the ICC while Muskrat began yet another large-scale public relations and lobbying campaign on their behalf. Though secretary of the interior Krug authorized the Hydaburg, Barrow, and Shungnak reservations in 1949, Native land claims to Tongass lands would not be settled until the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971. In exchange for rescinding all future claims and forfeiting reserve lands, the ANCSA recognized Native title to forty million acres, provided compensation upwards of one billion dollars, and authorized the creation of twelve regional economic boards and numerous village corporations. Cowger 62.

53 HCR 108 identified tribes that were to be removed from federal trust and states that were to assume services and responsibilities. PL 280 extended state civil and criminal jurisdiction over selected Indian reservations in California, Minnesota, Nebraska, Oregon, and Wisconsin with the implication that other states could do the same should they choose to amend their constitutions. Together, the bills committed the federal government to coercive, compulsory termination. See Deloria and Lytle 192-93, Cowger 112-13, and Fixico *Termination* 112.

54 Cowger 100.

55 Ibid 99-125.

56 Those initially targeted included the Flatheads of Montana, Klamaths of Oregon, Menominees of Wisconsin, Potawatomis of Kansas, and the Chippewas of North Dakota.

57 Proposing and passing more federal Indian legislation than any other Congressional body in U.S. history, the 83rd Congress introduced 288 resolutions, of which 46 were passed into law, in its first two years alone. Donald Fixico notes further, "Between 1954 and 1960, a total of sixty-one tribes, Indian groups, communities, *rancherías*, and allotments were terminated by congressional legislation," and that "[t]hroughout the entire termination period ... 109 cases of termination were initiated, affecting a minimum of 1,362,155 acres and 11,466 individuals" (*Termination* 180-81).

Afterword

Oskison's last published fictional work, *Brothers Three* (1938) chronicles one Cherokee family's struggles, successes, failures and attempts at redemption on their small farm in the northeast corner of the Cherokee Nation. Unlike his other novels, which are set exclusively in a pre-Oklahoma statehood past, *Brothers Three* follows its Cherokee family from the marriage of Francis Odell and Janet Keith (Cherokee) and the establishment of their farm in 1873 through the financial collapse of the Great Depression. As with *Black Jack Davy*, the novel is firmly situated in recognizable Cherokee geographies and rooted in Cherokee social and political history. A recent arrival to Indian Territory from California, Odell's marriage to a Cherokee citizen secures a lease to land from Janet's father on which they establish the Under-Ridge farm just east of the Verdigris River. As with the Daweses and Keenes, Odell freely accepts tribal jurisdiction and his place as an intermarried non-citizen and flatly resists agitation for territorialization and statehood. His boys are raised on the farm, educated in Cherokee public schools, participate in local politics, and, as citizens, receive allotments carved from the Under-Ridge lands. With the exception of Henry, they all marry and raise families within driving distance of one another and spend the balance of their lives on or near their allotment land. In this respect, *Brothers Three* is an intensely local narrative of family struggle, survival and persistence across some of the most chaotic and unstable periods of Cherokee history.

Extending past allotment and statehood well into the twentieth century, the novel also situates the Odell family within the larger currents that transformed Indian Territory from an isolated geography of Indian republics into an industrialized US state increasingly enmeshed in larger national and international affairs. In addition to their negotiations with non-citizen intruders, railroad and industrial interests, and allotment and territorialization agitators, the Odells also contend with agricultural reform groups like the Grange and Farmers' Alliance, and express concern over how labor movements and the fallout from the Haymarket Riots will affect commodity markets in the north. National economic crises in 1893, 1914 and 1929 similarly threaten the security of the Under-Ridge farm, the latter of which forces the Odells to sell vast portions of their interests in order salvage the family estate. Personal investments by each of the Odell sons in land speculation, banking and mining interests, and commodities and stock trading also threaten, but ultimately fail, to bring down the farm. Where descriptions of Klan violence in 1914 situates the text within a context of racial conflict that swept through the South in the nineteen-teens and early twenties, Henry's service in World War I as one of an unprecedented number of American Indians demonstrates the increasing impact of international relations on Indian families.

Though expanding the reach of Cherokee history both in terms of historical time and historical context, the narrative arc and central message of the story return to the local, as the novel refracts such transformations through the lives of the Odell family and their relationship to the farm and their land. As with many Cherokees from Oskison's

generation, each of the sons possesses a different relationship to the land. Though remaining on the farm well into his late twenties, the eldest son, Timothy, eventually relocates his family to the budding railroad town of Redbud where he opens a neighborhood dry goods store and becomes a land speculator and major shareholder in the local bank. An extremely competitive child of modern agricultural practice, the middle son, Roger, systematically transforms the farm from an intimate family affair into a large industrial producer, extending its economic interests into commodity cattle and mineral speculation. Made restless by his experiences at Stanford and, later, in the first World War, Henry, the youngest, is drawn to the bright lights and glamor of New York City, becoming a relatively successful writer, socialite, and, for a time, stock market investor.

While their initial successes suggest a largely positive accommodation with modernity, the narrative quickly adopts a cautious attitude; the further removed their lives are from the farm, the more unstable they become. After the railroad goes bust, Redbud dries up rendering Timothy's investments worthless. Having lost the store, his bank, and his roadster convertible, the material symbol of his wealth and masculinity, he begrudgingly returns to the farm and to his estranged, wife, May. Roger's aggressive expansion and leveraging of the farm's assets brings the Under-Ridge estate to the verge of bankruptcy, and the constant stress and anxiety of his business dealings leaves him incapacitated by a stroke which eventually takes his life. Henry, the figure most representative of the promises of geographic, social and economic mobility, moves from

one superficial relationship to another and is consumed by anxious conflict between his ties to home and an inexplicable allure to city life that he is never fully able to reconcile. His one attempt to put his education and worldly experience to work for the farm results in economic catastrophe, as he watches his monumental returns in the stock market vanish overnight.

Despite these seemingly despondent events, the central message of *Brothers Three* is optimistic. Through the ethic of hard work, honest dealing and modest ambition that she gained from Francis Odell, Timothy's wife, May, recovers the original lands of the Under-Ridge farm and reconciles with her husband. Roger, too, lives out the rest of his life on the family estate and, though silenced by stroke, is able to pass his experiences down to his sons and nephews. Henry, too, comes home, and it is in his return where the text makes its clearest statement on the relationship between belonging, family, home and land. Looking out over a fallow field with his nephews, Henry finally realizes what is it about the farm that insistently calls him home:

> Yes [I always come back]. And so will anybody else that belongs to the family as long as the Farm's vital. Buddie and C.F. know it is. Bud and I grew out of its soil … It all comes to this ... The Farm's a living organism. It's on starvation rations just now, but we've got to do better by it. It's nourished by the lives that are fed into it. If they're clean and sane and competent, like Pa's and Ma's were, the Farm will flourish … the Farm as we look down on it from here is worth giving ourselves to; it's real and

solid still—beautiful! (448)

As he stands next to his dead brother's sons and looks out upon the farm his mother and father built, Henry sees not fences and barns and cattle and cotton but the histories and relationships that are forged and continually renewed through the collective labor required to keep the farm healthy and productive. As a "living organism," the real strength of the farm lies neither in the composition nor construction of materials but in the relationships the farm makes possible. It is this kinship-oriented, labor-intensive, communitist ethic of family and place—"real and solid" and "beautiful"—that calls Henry home and that, ultimately, "is worth giving ourselves to." It is this ethic that sustains the Odell family across historical circumstance, economic crises, political upheaval, dislocation and personal tragedy.

This ethic also sustains nations. As the survival of Cherokee communities and the contemporary presence of the Cherokee Nation suggest, while the Cherokee national government might well have gone into a period of dormancy following allotment and Oklahoma statehood in the early twentieth century, Cherokee nationhood persisted as Cherokees continued to cultivate and renew relationships in a variety of ways. Rural Cherokees adapted kinship practices and innovative community development programs in the early twentieth century to sustain families throughout allotment and strengthen community self-reliance. Relationships were also cultivated and renewed through religious and spiritual practice. While members from the Nighthawk Keetoowahs perpetuated ceremonial and spiritual life at traditional stomp grounds, Cherokee Christian

denominations and the Native American Church offered alternative sites for religious worship, fellowship and social gathering. Those away at boarding schools, college and the military similarly organized associations with explicit ties to their home communities, as did a host of Cherokees who were forced by economic circumstances to relocate West. By the 1920s and 30s, Cherokee political reorganization, community development and language revitalization under the Cherokee Executive Council and the Keetoowah Society, Inc. began to take shape locally while a host of Cherokees continued to organize under national organizations like the SAI and NCAI. As scholars are only beginning to discover, what were once presumed to be the cultural and political "dark ages" of Cherokee history are revealing themselves to be a much more active—if not activist—period of Cherokee cultural and political resurgence. We have, literally, only begun to scratch the surface.

As this study contends, Oskison, Eaton, Riggs and Bronson were deeply embedded in this milieu, both in their historical relationships to Cherokee communities and in the intellectual and political projects they pursued. Part of a geographically and economically mobile class of Cherokees, they, like other Indians from similar backgrounds, put their knowledge and experiences of Cherokee life to work with their education and professional training to speak back to the dominant culture and to carve out a more productive space for Cherokee peoples. Trained in literary and historical traditions, Eaton and Oskison mobilize nineteenth century Cherokee legal and political history to advance stories of Cherokee sovereignty and national survival within popular

and academic genres that explicitly work against such narratives. Where these narratives recover the political and legal components of Cherokee nationhood, Riggs's drama reminds us that Cherokee identity and belonging are also negotiated in intensely personal and highly localized ways that exceed questions of sovereignty and citizenship. In the absence of legal definitions of community belonging and a functioning nation to adjudicate those claims, Cherokees in Riggs's narrative are left to navigate the cultural and experiential fallout of race-discourse that touches every aspect of Cherokee life. Combining training in literature, education, and social work, Bronson's activist-diplomatic performance of Cherokee identity reminds us that nationhood depends also on forging alliances outside of the national community as much as it does on cultivating relationships within it. Her geographic movement from the local to the national and back again, as well as her political movement toward a nation-centered politics of self-determination, also highlight the significance that personal relationships to community have for political activism and intellectual work. Together, this body of writing captures much of the diversity and historical complexity of the Cherokee national experience and evidences one arena among many in which ostensibly de-nationalized Cherokee citizens were working not simply to preserve Cherokee nationhood but to actively stoke it into a new generation.

As Frederick Hoxie writes, due to the generally hostile political and social climates in which they wrote, such negotiations were almost always vexed with compromise and contradiction. Both Eaton's and Oskison's texts reflect such tensions.

While their appropriation of the frontier romance and Indian biography into nineteenth century Cherokee national contexts subverts both genre's explicit colonialist intentions, the implication of Cherokee legal history within the gendered and racialized histories of settler-state nationalism consigns women, blacks and conservative Cherokees to the narrative margins. The maturation of Bronson's politics suggests a similar struggle to mobilize discourses of Christian charity, reformist benevolence and self-reliance that had often been levied against Native people in service of Indian-centered policy reform. Her gradual movement to an oppositional politics of self-determination suggests her inability to fully reconcile the two. And while Riggs undoubtedly intended his modernist drama of blood politics in *The Cherokee Night* as a social critique of race-thinking, his largely non-Indian audiences often found both his formal experimentation and his subject matter difficult to comprehend. To recognize such limitations is in no way to dismiss the monumental task they were undertaking, but to appreciate the fact of the effort itself and to honor what they were able to achieve.

After all, they chose to write. They chose to speak. The words of Henry Odell again come to mind.

> Aside from my writing, who am I, and of what importance to anybody? If there's substance to Henry Odell, it's expressed in his writing. He thinks it's important. He does it honestly, with all the talent he has. Compared to other writers, he may not be significant, but what he does is his own; and he thinks it's grand.

> [W]hat's an education for if not to enable one to relate the past to the present, and forecast the future?

Spoken by a character whose life and experience most closely aligns with the writers studied here, Henry attempts to makes sense of the farm's rapid deterioration and identify his responsibility in its decline. His words express anxieties concerning the relevance of intellectual work to contemporary life and the responsibility of putting one's talents to work for the interests of family and community. Read within the context of my dissertation, these statements highlight three assumptions driving this study: 1) that Cherokee writing is important because it evidences the continuing presence of Cherokee nationhood and national identity in a time when both were popularly assumed to be either defunct or dead; 2) that intellectual work from previous generations deserves our attention, sympathy and respectful consideration; and, 3) that work which critically engages history in order to imagine and contemplate productive futures can be a powerful resource to inform crucial issues facing our communities today.

Bronson's and Eaton's lives and work, for instance, recover Cherokee female leadership and intellectual traditions that, while perhaps valorized at the local level, are often elided in discussions of Cherokee intellectual and political histories. Resituating them alongside Nanye'hi and Mankiller restores Cherokee women to their rightful place in our national story—something Eaton herself was unable to do—and enriches our understandings of both the breadth and depth of early twentieth century Cherokee

intellectual production. Riggs and Oskison also have important things to say with respect to contemporary questions of citizenship and belonging. Riggs's critique of the self-destructive imperative embedded in ahstorical discourses of blood can and should be used as a critical lens through which to critique how the racialized, "non-Indian" rhetoric directed at Cherokee freedmen descendants coming from the Cherokee government erases the complex, complicated, and often violent interracial history of Cherokees and blacks. Likewise, Oskison's inscription of a politically-strong, explicitly multi-cultural Cherokee state rooted in a concept of citizenship based upon political commitment and sacrifice similarly counters contemporary reckonings of citizenship and belonging based upon rigid qualifications of descent tied to government rolls and federal blood quantum cards. Read together, they pose serious challenges to contemporary political and legal efforts that claim racism as an act of sovereignty or marshal prejudice in the name of self-determination. Considering the social condemnation and legal attacks to Cherokee sovereignty such moves provoked within Indian Country and across the US, Bronson's life's work on behalf of other Indian communities emphasizes the continuing necessity of intertribal diplomacy, extratribal alliance and broad-based coalition-building in efforts to protect, strengthen, and expand Cherokee sovereignty and self-determination.

If intellectual sovereignty is the processes by which Native peoples have negotiated what it means to be Indian in a given historical moment and, in doing so, finding out "what possibilities traditions open up for finding a way to relate to the world of which we are a part," then as a citizen-scholar I am compelled to read these authors

and texts as attempting, on their own ways and from their own times, to imagine their way into such possibilities (Warrior, *Tribal* 106). By examining how Cherokees from earlier generations attempted to escape the victimizing narratives of absence, decline, and doom by modeling and imagining alternatives to colonial violence, we engage—to paraphrase one of Riggs's characters—how we got here, what we're doing here, and where we're going. Reclaiming these authors and texts as powerful, distinctly Cherokee responses to the world in which they lived recovers their potential to do productive work in Cherokee communities, even if we fail ultimately to subscribe to the visions they put forward or buy fully into their conclusions. Hardly misguided assimilationists or relics of a forgotten "dark age," the writers and texts examined here deserve a rightful place at the center of contemporary discussions over sovereignty, nationhood, citizenship and belonging.

Appendix

The following selections by Ruth Muskrat Bronson appeared across five editions of the Oklahoma Institute of Technology's *Crimson Rambler* between November 1914 and November 1915. As far as I have been able to determine, they have never reappeared in print. Aside from corrections to minor spelling and punctuation errors, they are reproduced here in their original format.

"The Callin' of the Farm"
Ruth Muskrat, '17

From the night I hear a callin'
Tis a voice so soft and small,
Like the tinklin' water fallin'.
Just a little smothered call:
And my heart yearns just to answer,
For it has a subtle charm;
And I pause as I remember,
'Tis the calling of the Farm.

In the morn with birds a singin',
Till it seems they'd split their throats,
I can hear a sound a ringin'
Like the squealin' of the shoats:
I can see the dewdrops glisten,
And it surely can't do harm
If I pause a while to listen
To the callin' of the Farm.

When the sun is high at noonday,
Comes and echo through the trees,
'Cross furrowed land and meadow hay

It is wafted on the breeze.
While I study at my lessons
Comes the call with all its charm,
And it bides me to stop and listen
To the callin' of the Farm.

With the evenin' shadows fallin',
And the night birds everywhere,
I can hear that same old callin',
In a voice so sweet and clear,
Though I've work that here may need me,
I cannot withstand the charm.
I must answer – do not blame me-
'Tis the callin' of the Farm.

"The Shady Deeps"
Ruth Muskrat, '17

Did you ever walk in the shady deeps,
An' listen to the frogs holler,
That kind of squeakin' noisy cheeps,
That makes you want to foller
An, see what kind of meetin'
Is givin' such an noisy greetin'
To you from out the river?

The flowers that bloom in the shady deeps
Are beautiful, pale, and holy,
For the bright sunshine, that
darts an' creeps,
Has reached their blossoms slowly.
In the cool of the deeps,
Where the calm wind sweeps
They live their lives so lowly.

The lesson that's taught in the shady deeps,
Is a lesson that's worth while,
For 'mong the still fragrance of the deeps,

Is God's ineffable smile
An' there we find contentment, and freedom from resentment
Against the things that make life a trial.

"The Wail of the Helpless"
Ruth M. Muskrat, '17

They have come, they have come,
Out of the unknown they have come,
Out of the great sea have they come,
Dazzling and conquering, the white man has come,
To make this land his own.

We must die, we must die.
The white-man has sentenced that we must die,
With our great forests must we die,
Broken and conquered, the Red-man must die,
He cannot claim his own.

They have gone, they have gone,
The sky-blue waters, they have gone,
The wild free prairies, they have gone,
From the hands of the Red-man, have they gone,
To be the white-man's own.

They have won, they have won,
Through fraud and through warfare, they have won,
Our council and burial grounds, have they won,
Our birthright for pottage, the white man has won
And the Red-man must perish alone.

"The Killing of Gillstrape"
Ruth Muskrat, '16

The sky was a dull deep gray. There had been no sun all day long, and the Spavinaw hills were topped with snow which had fallen the day before. Long Rattlesnake Ridge there ran a long straight road down into Rattlesnake hollow and across the Spavinaw River. The snow which had crusted over the road had not been broken except for an occasional horseback straggler who had dared to brave the bitter cold and this danger of approaching storm. Across on Lone Wolf Ridge, covered with tall green pines, could be seen occasionally the dark flitting form of and Indian hunter. The Spavinaw River which flowed through Rattlesnake hollow, gurgled, chattered, and roared as it dashed and whirled down its rocky bed in and out among the innumerable Spavinaw hills.

On the bank of this river under a high cliff, stood three men. They had about them the air of being watched. They moved cautiously and were constantly scanning the hills. They were Indians and all were dressed alike. They wore broad-brimmed hats and thick yellow coats lined with red and gray striped flannel which showed through on the lapel of the coat, and several other worn places. Their shirts were of black flannel, and their trousers, once a yellow color but now soiled and darkened, were tucked into high gum boots which came to the knees. Each carried a huge gun.

They were the Wycliff brothers, the noted Cherokee outlaws who terrorized the people of Delaware county and the surrounding country during the years 1907 and 1908. They had committed some small offense-I think it was disturbing the peace at a small school-house, and in order to escape punishment had gone into hiding in the Spavinaw Hills.

Gillstrape, a bigoted, cowardly sheriff, had gone to their home and commanded the feeble father to tell where his boys were hiding. When the father refused to tell, Gillstrape took the butt-end of a rawhide whip he had with him and beat the old man without mercy. Since then the boys- with the Indian passion for revenge - had sworn not to surrender or be taken until they had killed Gillstrape.

The group was joined by a slender boy on horseback, who dashed perilously into the river and up to where they stood. He was dressed like the rest, but he was tall and slender. He bore little family resemblance to the others though he was a brother. He was also dark, but, strange to say, he had a shock of red hair. His eyes flashed with fire and action, and his whole attitude was one of bold, reckless daring.

"Red," said John, the oldest in a gruff tone, "don't you know better than to bring a horses here?"

“Naw,” carelessly brawled the boy. “Nobody here to hurt us - none of our enemies I mean.”

“Not, eh?” John waved his hand. “What do ye see up there?”

“Who-ee,” Red said slowly as he caught sight of some dark forms on Rattlesnake ridge. “I reckon though I am ready.”

“Did you get in home, Red?” asked Dan, another brother.

“Yes, but it was mighty tough work through-had to sneak in. They were watching the house. Bill died last night. We (Dad and I) buried him about midnight. They don’t know he is dead, and won’t know.”

“Dead!” the tone was one of real grief though the news was received with the usual Indian stoicism. “That leaves only four of us and our brother’s death to avenge. No, it is best that the posse don’t know they killed him. Poor Bill-he was the oldest of us all and the best fighter. Gillstrape did it. I saw the bullet leave his gun.”

“How is ma, Red?” asked Jack, a tall heavy set man.

“Not very well. Bill’s death will make it hard for her. She wants us to give up and come home. She is afraid we are starving.”

“Not much danger of that; we have plenty of friends who will feed us, and game is by no means scarce,“ John said as he fingered his gun.

“I hate this life,” Jack continued, ”but I hate Gillstrape worse, and I’ll not surrender until we have killed him --------.”

“By Jove, Boys!” Red spoke hastily. “I believe that is old Gillstrape now on Rattlesnake ridge. Something strange too for him to be out by himself. Guess he isn’t looking to find company such a day like this, or he would have his usual pack of hired men with him. He has only one blood-hound, too – ‘Twill be some surprise for old Gills all right.”

The boys looked and saw that what Red said was true. For the first time since coming to hunt the outlaws, Gillstrape was alone. A swift gleam of hatred came into and hardened the face of each of the four men hidden from the sight behind the cliff.

John’s usual surly tone was not made more gruff by the passion and bitterness he felt. “He is alone, boys and there are four of us. That wouldn’t be fair play. You all stay here

and I'm going to meet this man. Give me your horse, Red. I am going –stand back! I will go, I said! If he should see me first then make quick of him, boys. But don't shoot until I fall."

He mounted the horse and was off without another word. Death was written in every line of his face. It was hard to be a fair, man-to-man combat. One of the two must die; the result depended wholly on the quickness and coolness of the two men.

Gillstrape was walking his horse slowly along the road. It was plain he wasn't looking for company. His face was cool and red. One could easily tell he had been using a stimulant to keep him warm. He was a wiry little fellow, cordially hailed by everybody, for he was well known to be over-bearing and cruel.

John Wycliff waited in the bend of the road-his hand on the trigger of his gun. As Gillstrape rode around the bend, Wycliff pushed his horse forward.

"Cee-o," he said wickedly. Gillstrape instantly raised his gun, but Wycliff grinned and said, "No, don't!" A shot rang out but it had missed its mark.

Said Wycliff, "I'll show you how to whip old men who are helpless. I'll show how to kill our brother. Like it? Bah! Coward!" he cried as Gillstrape begged for mercy. "You didn't have mercy-take gun, shoot. If I shoot first you die."

The guns came up again. Two shots rang out, and Gillstrape lay dead in the road. John turned and shot the blood-hound that was standing near.

The three brothers stripped Gillstrape of his coat, spread it on the ground and lifted the dog upon it. Gillstrape, they left lying, uncovered in the show, thus showing that they had more respect for the dog than for the man.

A month later, after the feeling aroused by the murder of Gillstrape had somewhat subsided, there rode into the little town of Grove four men on horseback. They came alone, unmasked, uncompelled; and gave themselves into the hands of the new sheriff. Three were tall, strong, dark and the rather heavy set; the fourth was tall and slender with a shock of red hair. They Wycliff brothers had surrendered. After they had spent three months in the county jail, public sentiment became so strong in their favor that they were all released.

"Oklahoma as a Background for Literature"
Ruth Muskrat, '17

Oklahoma—the land that has quivered under the lash of a thousand tragedies; that has vibrated under the force of a million joys—has emerged triumphant, her unique history clinging to her as a protecting garment, and she calmly waits for some of her sons and daughters to discover the world her store of romance and tragedy.

For, in her scenery is the inspiration and in her history the material that make her a striking background for literature. In her scenery as well as in her citizens, there is great variety. She ranges from the foothills of the Rockies to the swamps of the Arkansas, and from the plains of Kansas to the valley of the Red River. In the Northeast section, formerly the Indian Territory, she claims the beautiful sparkling, but treacherous Spavinaw River and the innumerable pine crested Spavinaw hills, rich in the lore and legend of all the Cherokee people, which would furnish ample inspiration to another heart throbbing with sympathy, and a desire to right the wrongs of a down-trodden race—for another Romona. The Arbuckle mountains, too, are included within her borders. They stand in all their magnificent grandeur, as a silent witness of thousands of outlaw deeds, of countless Indian wars, and of every-day joys and sorrows. And their unparalleled beauty, to-together with the silent message that they give, makes them an inspiration for one with the lyric impulse. The long stretches of snowy crystal salt plains in the Northwest, the Kiamichi mountains in the Southeast filled with the nimble-footed deer and the wild turkey, are as much a part of Oklahoma as broad fertile pirates, broken by swiftly flowing rivers and broken occasionally with little circular pools of water.

To the alien mind these small pools mean but little, but to an Oklahoman they are known as "Buffalo Wallows," and the sight of them instantly recalls to mind those early days when the Oklahoma plains were covered with these shaggy monarch of the prairies, and when the Indian, the hero of the forest, lord and master of them all, rode at will the wild free prairies on his hunt for buffalo. Later, after the countless herds had been diminished by the reckless slaughter of the white man, nothing but their bones and the "wallows" remained to tell the story of their numbers and the broad plains stood ready to take on a new life.

This change from the buffalo days was rapid, and for a brief period, cattle held dominion over the plains. During this time it was customary for the Texas cattle to come through Oklahoma on their way to market. So the plains that had been covered only a short time before with shaggy buffalo, were now covered with grazing cattle. The busy, boisterous cowboy had taken the place of the leisurely Indian. There were the night fires, the stampedes and the years of drought, when the scorching winds from the Texas prairies seared the grass and sapped the vitality from every living creature. Full of romance and tragedy are those drought ridden years, when each drive might be the last, when the

streams sank out of sight and the choking dust settled in the grass until it became unfit for food.

The winters, too, held their terrors for man and beast. In the wake of an unexpected blizzard was left many a show grave. Or again a carelessly dropped match—the fire that followed cannot be expressed in words. In the high and tangled grass where its victims were hindered in their efforts to escape it too seems to linger and to delight in the wearing out of their supple muscles, but when it reaches short grass and its prey escaping, tiny tongues of fire run over the ground swifter than a swiftly flying cloud-leaping pools of water, flinging glowing straws into the air and stopping only when natures seems to revolt at the wanton waste and quenches it forever.

Those early conditions are now only memory. The unbroken seas of grass have given way to the billowy fields of wheat and corn. The cotton has taken the place of the rank vegetation. At night one may see, instead of the gleam of a cowboy's camp, the lamplight glow from a nearby farmhouse. Cities have sprung up along the old trails; the rolling prairies are divided into sections and are dotted here and there with comfortable farm-houses.

In many respects the history of Oklahoma is one of romance, in the others it is teeming with tragedy. It is, as the name implies, a land of the Red Man. In the earlier history of every other state, the Indian has played a brief pathetic part. In Oklahoma alone has he been such an important constructive force. So close has been the relation between the state and the Indian that the history of the one is interwoven with the history of the other; though, as a state, she may owe the greater part of her development to the white man.

The first white man to cross her border was Coronado in 1541 while searching for his fabulous "Seven cities of Cibola." In 1808 Oklahoma was bought from France by the United States and set aside as Indian territory, and the Indians were moved here to make their homes. Countless tribes came here to start life anew. Many had been driven from the land of their fathers and forced to come to this new land, broken hearted and listless, to frequent new haunts, to build new homes, to make new council fires, and to start new burial grounds. The way to Oklahoma for some lay over the "trail of tears" and nothing short of death could heal many broken hearts. Even as the Old Arcadians, they were a nation in exile.

For a time, Oklahoma became the field for Indian feuds and Indian wars. The Civil war wrought utter devastation among the Indians of Oklahoma, but the passing of the years and the coming of the white man brought a change; and the Indian, led by the five Civilized tribes, entered into the work of developing his land.

Oklahoma is the youngest pioneer state of the Union. Every Oklahoma knows and thrills at the memory of the opening-of the long struggle of the "Boomers" to settle in Oklahoma and how one April day at noon the guns were fired and the long race for claims and homes began. Then followed the long years of pioneer life, of the struggle against drought and loneliness, when the pioneers lived in dugouts and the smallest frame house seemed a luxury, and finally the triumphant victory over all these hardships—Oklahoma took her place among the foremost states of the union. The opening of Oklahoma was the culmination and climax of the story of American pioneering.

Not even so much because of her scenery or even because of her history is Oklahoma a splendid background for literature, but rather because of her great variety of citizens. Her citizenship is a composite of every state in the union. Oklahoma is considered the melting pot of America, because every race and every nation represented in America is found in Oklahoma. Here the North and the South the East and the West, have met and blended through their people. Here the homeseeker and the prospector, the politician and the townbuilder, the ranchman and the pioneer may be found side by side. Here also is found the blood of the Puritan and the Cavalier, the Patroon and the Convenanter, while many of her people are proud to trace their descent from the American race as well, and out of these have sprung a people unequaled for their thrift, sociability and practical intelligence.

The Indian too, whose character is a particular combination of good and bad, comprises a large part of her citizenship. Nature has stamped the Indian with a hard and stoic physiognomy. His cold temperament is often hard to reach through friendship, but once a friendship is formed there is no tie strong enough to break it. His pride sets all language at defiance and his wild love of liberty is his ruling passion. Many of the old men are real philosophers, and their ideas of life, together with their quaint ways of expressing them, give them a distinctness all their own.

At first glance is seems that Oklahoma is much too young to claim a background for literature but when one pauses to consider he is almost amazed at the vastness of material that is really there. Almost any place of her history may be taken and molded into fiction. She is the home of a race that is fast being exterminated and about which sadly has been written. Many unique Indian characters have lived and died here, such as John Ross, Geronimo and Quanah Parker. At Fort Sill to-day she holds as prisoners of war the tribe of Apache Indians, the only prisoners of war in the United States. Fort Gibson is probably the oldest place of note, founded in 1822 and visited, ten years later, by Washington Irving. The cowboy lore too, his ballads and his stories, belongs to Oklahoma. Truly Oklahoma is an excellent background for literature.

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